

Meeting of the Council, Thursday, 26 February 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 Carter to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

In late January there was flooding on Dartmouth Road, caused by debris partially blocking the outfall screen and Goodrington Beach. Can the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking please explain why the appropriate maintenance to keep this free of debris had not occurred?

Answer to Question 1 provided by Councillor Billings

Appropriate maintenance had indeed taken place.

The outfall screen and overflow pipe at Goodrington is important infrastructure and is checked on a regular basis to ensure it remains free-flowing under normal tidal conditions.

The flooding in late January occurred during a period of unprecedented stormy weather, with a combination of very high rainfall and extremely high tides. At the time of the incident, the tide level was above the height of the overflow pipe. This prevented the drainage system discharging into the sea and floodwater had nowhere to go until the tide dropped.

Once the tide receded and the outfall became exposed, the pipe was inspected and found to be free-flowing, confirming that the reason the water could not drain was due to the exceptional tidal conditions and not a lack of maintenance.

Question 2

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

I understand that ambulances that were formerly based in Paignton have now been relocated to Torquay. Following this relocation there is a need for a new Community Ambulance Point. Can I be advised as to how the council are working with South West Ambulance Service Trust to identify the new Community Ambulance Point?

Answer to Question 2 provided by Councillor Tranter

Torbay Council is working with SWASFT to identify a suitable location for the new Community Ambulance Point. We recognise that whilst ambulances are usually deployed from the community, a community ambulance point is essential for the wellbeing of staff and shift support. Our involvement will ensure suitable and accessible options within Paignton are considered.

Question 3

Councillor Virdee to the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator (Councillor Long)

It is pleasing that the Memorial Bench Policy will be reviewed at the April Overview and Scrutiny Meeting. Could the Overview and Scrutiny Chair advise whether, in his opinion, this policy should have come before Overview and Scrutiny before it was implemented?

Answer to Question 3 provided by Councillor Long

In my view if the Memorial Bench Policy had come before Overview and Scrutiny before being implemented it could have resulted in a better considered policy which would have avoided the unnecessary upset and concern amongst the members of the public affected.

One of the roles of Overview and Scrutiny is to contribute to developing policy and bring the voice and needs of our communities to any developing policy and I believe that this would have added real value if it had been undertaken at a formative stage of the Memorial Bench Policy rather than retrospectively.

Question 4

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

Following damage caused by a recent vehicle collision, the Council has removed and is refusing to repair damage to one of the Chilcote Memorial Street lamps. The lamp is Grade 2 Listed as part of the 'Chilcote Memorial Including 3 Street Lamps' and is central to St Marychurch's heritage. Will the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking reconsider and commit to repairing this Grade 2 Listed Monument.

Answer to Question 4 provided by Councillor Billings

The Council is not refusing to repair the damage referred to on one of the Chilcote Memorial Street lamps.

SWISCo's highways team have been liaising with Torbay Council's Estates team to consider options for the lighting around the Chilcote Memorial, which is currently subject to a refurbishment scheme.

The original lamp post was removed from the scene at the time of the accident. The damage sustained meant it was not salvageable. The lighting units form part of the listed structure and therefore any replacements are required to fully match the design of the original unit, this means that a bespoke manufactured unit would need to be sourced. To this end an ironwork restorer has been commissioned to prepare a specification to replace the lamppost.

Early indications are that the cost of obtaining such a replacement is likely to be in the region of £35k. This presents a significant pressure on the identified budget for the scheme to restore the Memorial. The Estates Team are therefore considering all options. Unfortunately, the Council has been unsuccessful in identifying the driver responsible for the road traffic collision and therefore are unable to pursue any claim to recover any costs for the damage caused.

Question 5

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

The St Marychurch and District Community Partnership were recently informed that the Council does not have access rights to Haytor Park from Westhill Road. This has led to problems with public access, maintenance, and concerns about the future of the park. Can the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking advise what action the Council and SWISCo will take to secure and improve access to Haytor Park?

Answer to Question 5 provided by Councillor Billings

The pedestrian access paths to Haytor Park were improved during winter 2025/26. In relation to the vehicular access from Westhill Road, the Council has a right of way 'at all times for all purposes with or without vehicles' over land owned by a third party. I am so advised the language of this right is clear and unambiguous meaning there should be no concern over future maintenance access.

To maintain the park as efficiently as possible and work as collaboratively as possible with neighbours, SWISCo currently communicates with the third party landowner to agree suitable times for maintenance.

Maintenance schedules are currently being arranged for the upcoming grass-cutting season and no difficulties are foreseen.

Question 6

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

Can the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth provide an update on the proposed solar farm at Nightingale Park in Torquay?

Answer to Question 6 provided by Councillor Chris Lewis

We have discussed a way forward with the NHS to deliver the site in partnership which was received positively. We are in the process of formalising the offer to the NHS and will report progress back in March.

Question 7

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

Can the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth provide an update on the regeneration scheme proposed for Torre Marine?

Answer to Question 7 provided by Councillor Chris Lewis

Torre Marine retains an extant planning consent however the viability challenge remains due to some specific site constraints. Once the delivery team have completed the construction design work on Crossways we will have capacity to deploy to see what options we have to get to delivery.

Question 8

Councillor Douglas-Dunbar to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)

Sites in Torbay fall under the designations of "special sites of scientific interest" and "special areas of conservation." Could the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth confirm what these designations mean in the management of the sites which fall under them, and how are SWISCo and other partner agencies equipped to fulfil the requirements of these designations?

Answer to Question 8 provided by Councillor Chris Lewis

Sites with these designations are legally protected for their ecological, geological or habitat value, the designations influence what you can do on the land and how and when you can do it.

The Council with SWISCo are working closely with Natural England and Devon County Council ecologists to ensure the post-TCCT arrangements are compliant with all relevant legal obligations with regard to these and other designations.

Question 9

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

The MyBay Discount card has staffing and administrative costs of £39,350 and advertising costs of £12,100. 2,200 residents paid to have a card (with 704 given free to carers). Can the Cabinet Member for Tourism, Events & Culture and Corporate Services advise what the measurable outputs of this scheme are?

Answer to Question 9 provided by Councillor Jackie Thomas

The measurable outputs of the Torbay MyBay Discount Card scheme can be seen in both economic and social terms. The programme gives something tangible back to residents while strengthening our town centres. By offering discounts across attractions, shops and cafés, and providing free access to public conveniences, the scheme removes barriers that might otherwise shorten visits. Parking incentives such as “pay for one hour, get a second hour free” encourage residents to stay longer, increasing dwell time and supporting additional spend with local businesses. Early feedback from participating traders indicates increased visits linked to card use, demonstrating how the scheme helps drive footfall and supports the vitality of our high streets.

Beyond the economic impact, MyBay improves accessibility and inclusion. Free toilet access and visible savings particularly benefit older residents, families, and those with health needs, making town centres more welcoming and easier to navigate. The growing number and diversity of participating businesses shows strong local engagement and reinforces collaboration across the retail, hospitality and tourism sectors. In simple terms, MyBay enables residents to spend more time in their communities, supports local traders, and ensures that the benefits of regeneration are felt directly by the people who live here.

Question 10

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

Can the Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance please advise how many people have inherited properties which are having the additional Council Tax premium applied to them as a result of the inheritors not being able to sell them?

Answer to Question 10 provided by Councillor Tyerman

The statutory basis of Council Tax means that only information relevant to Council Tax liability can be stored and this information is not relevant to Council Tax liability. There are many situations that exist, such as Executors choosing to sell a property, rather than it being inherited, beneficiaries inheriting properties and choosing not to sell, beneficiaries choosing to undertake renovation work on properties prior to sale to increase its value or beneficiaries trying to sell properties at rates that the market does not support. There is no way of recording the many varied reasons why someone who inherits a property may become subject to a premium in a manner that allows for it to be extracted and reported.

If a dwelling is left unoccupied as a result of the owner dying, it is entirely exempt from Council Tax for as long as it takes for probate to be granted and for a further six months afterwards. The dwelling is also excluded from the Council Tax premium for twelve months after the grant of probate.

Question 11

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

There have been reports of Royal Mail returning postal votes undelivered due to addresses being printed incorrectly in the recent Brixham Town Council by-election. Are these reports correct?

Answer to Question 11 provided by Councillor Jackie Thomas

Following the referenced reports, Royal Mail were contacted and an investigation was carried out to see if postal votes had been received at the sorting office with addresses printed incorrectly.

Royal Mail have confirmed that this was not the case. Their investigation found no instances of addresses being incorrectly printed. Rather, they identified five completed postal vote packs where electors had inadvertently placed the insert inside the envelope the wrong way round, making the address difficult to read. Royal Mail returned these items to the Council, which were received prior to polling day and therefore they were included in the count.

No wider issues concerning the non-delivery of postal votes, nor any other concerns were reported, either during the postal vote period or on polling day.

Second Round

Question 12

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

People living with dementia and their families in Devon are facing increasing pressure, with only three Dementia Support Workers now covering the county and many people receiving only very limited support following diagnosis. We have also been told that Devon's dementia strategy was not formally ratified by the Integrated Care Board, leaving no clear timetable for a dedicated dementia plan, and risking decisions being dominated by a small, clinician-led, Cornwall-centric approach with little community or democratic input.

Can the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities explain what action the Council is taking to secure a properly resourced, Devon-focused dementia strategy, ensure meaningful involvement of communities and elected members, and improve support for people with dementia and their families in the short and long term?

Answer to Question 12 provided by Councillor Tranter

We recognise the importance of ensuring that people with dementia and their families have access to local services which best meet their needs and continue to work in partnership with the Integrated Care Board and the community and voluntary sector to ensure dementia care is available across the whole of Devon. Dementia is a cross-system issue requiring co-operation between social care, community partners, health services and voluntary sector organisations and it is therefore an area where integrated care can have a significant impact. We will continue to advocate for long-term investment in prevention, early recognition and community-based care using our attendance at the One Devon Board as one vehicle to highlight this priority.

Question 13

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

Last year, the public bin next to the Lady Mount Temple Statue on Babbacombe Downs was removed following a vehicle collision. The railings and signage were replaced yet the bin was not; can the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking explain why the Council has not committed to replacing this?

Answer to Question 13 provided by Councillor Billings

The bin was damaged in November 2023. However, as there are already two existing bins within 20 metres in either direction, SWISCo considered it more appropriate to direct litter-management resources into enhancing collection frequency and maintaining a regular operative presence rather than simply replacing the bin on a like-for-like basis. This approach has worked in other locations and reduces the likelihood of odours emanating from public bins during summer months. When assessed during the Britian in Bloom competition, litter was not identified at this award-winning park.

Question 14

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

In December, the Cabinet agreed to list the Reddenhill Road toilet block as a surplus asset for disposal. This runs contrary to the Council's recent draft Play Strategy, which encourages the development of amenities at principal parks; Reddenhill Road Toilets historically served Cary Park, with community aspirations to see them brought back into use now dashed. Will the Council listen to these community aspirations and commit to exploring alternative options for toilet services at Cary Park, in line with its Play Strategy?

Answer to Question 14 provided by Councillor Billings

Beyond the delivery of the funded urgent safety improvement works, the draft play strategy sets out an ambition to consult with local communities about their aspirations for play spaces in their area, through a variety of engagement opportunities views will be sought to create masterplans that can be delivered in stages as funding is made available.

If it transpires that there is a demonstratable need and significant support for WC provision within Cary Park it can be included in the masterplan as an aspiration until sufficient funding is available for delivery.

The current long term redundant and dilapidated WCs at this location would not only be the least cost-effective option of providing WCs they would present an almost impossible challenge in terms of refurbishing them to meet modern regulations and standards.

I consider that the planned disposal of long term redundant and dilapidated WCs at this location has no impact on the future provision of WCs here.

Question 15

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

Many residents have contacted colleagues and I about the sudden changes to the 35A and 35C bus routes in St Marychurch. This decision was made without resident or local councillor consultation, with discussion only being arranged in retrospect, and is causing significant difficulties for residents. Can the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking tell us why residents and local councillors were not consulted earlier, before the changes, to find a workable solution?

Answer to Question 15 provided by Councillor Billings

This administration has supported bus patronage by increasing the public subsidy to bus services by 50%. However, the 35A and 35C bus routes remain commercial services which operate without public subsidy. This is important context as it was hence Stagecoach's decision as operator, not the Council's decision, to vary the route.

As soon as Stagecoach received some of the new electric busses at their Torbay Depot, they were sent out on the various routes the operator runs in Torbay for testing purposes. It was this testing which identified that the existing route could not be safely and reliably served by the new vehicles. The legal requirement is that operators provide a minimum 42 day notice period for bus service route registrations. This requirement meant that Stagecoach's decision had to be taken quickly to avoid interruption to the service.

Mitigation on both Hartop Road and Park Road will require traffic regulation orders which again, have a separate legal process that will also take time and could not have been implemented temporarily or otherwise in the time available.

Members were then contacted about the change ahead of time and advised that we would be considering options for how best to proceed longer term. This was discussed at the Road Network and Travel Working Party on 19th February where a recommendation was put forward to consider an option for a circular link on Park Road, with actions depending on the solution to the issue with the protruding wall.

Question 16

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

Can the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth Provide an update on progress being made to bring forward homes on the former gas works at Hollicombe?

Answer to Question 16 provided by Councillor Chris Lewis

Officers have had continuing engagement with the landowner, most recently in January to offer our support in moving the site forward. The issue remains that the cost of development exceeds the likely value to the developer, and hence unless the developer is prepared to reduce their expectations on land value and or attract a sizable capital grant from the public sector, the site is likely to continue to be stalled.

Question 17

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

Can the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth provide an update on the regeneration proposed for Station Square, and the multi storey car park to ensure there's sufficient car parking in Paignton?

Answer to Question 17 provided by Councillor Chris Lewis

Officers have commenced work on Masterplans for both Victoria Square and Station Gateway (which includes and incorporates the design for Station Square. With a target to take both to public consultation by the end of this calendar year.

Question 18

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

What are the land management plans that the Council has inherited from Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust, and what assurances can the Council make to ensure these will be fulfilled and/or enhanced going forward?

Answer to Question 18 provided by Councillor Billings

No management plans, ecological obligations or site-specific records were inherited and despite significant effort none have been found. The Council, working through SWISCo, is therefore putting arrangements in place to deliver baseline assessments and structured maintenance systems to ensure that appropriate plans are developed and delivered, with improved ecological stewardship, stronger community involvement and long-term sustainability at their core.

Question 19

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

Will the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking join me in thanking the council officers who are working so well with the community who are striving to provide a replacement for Victoria Skatepark?

Answer to Question 19 provided by Councillor Billings

I am sure all officers across the Council do their best to work on behalf of our communities.

However, that work can best be focussed to address the individual needs of our various communities when it is Member led. For example, the engagement which I believe took place on Monday night in Shiphay with representatives from SWISCo talking to ward members about their play park project.

Question 20

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

Why are businesses on Lucius Street in Torquay excluded from receiving grants from the Enterprise Fund?

Answer to Question 20 provided by Councillor Chris Lewis

There are 2 elements to the Enterprise Fund – Start Up Grant and Retail Unit Improvement Grant each strand intended to help stimulate economic activity in Torbay. The funding for the start up grant was not geographically restricted within Torbay. For the retail unit it was agreed to set defined geographical areas, the areas and the rationale has been set out to interested parties on the Council's website [Torbay Enterprise Fund - Torbay Council](#). There is a strong rationale favouring concentrated area investment to achieve more visible change and build the perception of these areas and align with wider town centre regeneration activity.

Third Round

Question 21

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

Many residents were left to manage excess household waste over the Christmas and New Years period due to delays in SWISCo's recycling and bin collections. This was attributed to 'icy conditions and excess cardboard,' neither of which are unforeseeable around Christmas. Will the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking inform us what review and action SWISCo is undertaking to prevent this happening this year too?

Answer to Question 21 provided by Councillor Billings

Over Christmas and New Year there are three Bank Holidays on which SWISCo do not run recycling and waste collections. There is also an increase in quantity of recycling and waste. As with every Christmas period, SWISCo plan their operations to manage impact of lost bank-holiday collections and the seasonal increase in recycling materials.

The planned Christmas schedule was advertised extensively on the Council and SWISCo website and was designed so collections would be back on schedule within three weeks and the longest any collection would be delayed was three days. Despite a significant rise in the amount of recycling presented for collections, especially bulky cardboard and icy conditions which presented serious safety hazards to the collection crews SWISCo collections were back on schedule, as per the plan within three weeks.

As Cabinet Member responsible I am proud of the work of SWISCo and highlight SWISCo and Torbay Council's response to Christmas 2025 has been one of the most efficient in the area. The catch-up achieved by SWISCo and Torbay is quicker than the catch up achieved by many of our neighbours and throughout communications from both SWISCo and Torbay Council have kept the public updated.

Question 22

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

Since the closure of the TSB Bank in St Marychurch, many residents have raised concerns regarding access to local banking services. The original Torbay Community Wealth Building report referenced the possibility of providing a local credit union and supporting the South West Mutual. Can the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities inform us of what progress the Council has made on this to provide local banking hubs for residents?

Answer to Question 22 provided by Councillor Tranter

The Council recognises the concerns raised by residents following the closure of the TSB branch in St Marychurch, particularly in relation to access to cash and in-person banking services. Ensuring that communities are not disadvantaged by the ongoing national trend of high street bank closures remains a priority.

As referenced, the original Torbay Community Wealth Building report highlighted opportunities to strengthen local financial resilience, including exploring the development of a community credit union model and supporting the emerging regional mutual bank, South West Mutual.

Progress to date is as follows:

- **South West Mutual:**
The Council has maintained dialogue with South West Mutual since the publication of the report. While we remain supportive of the principle of a regionally focused mutual bank, the organisation has not yet reached the stage of full regulatory approval from the Prudential Regulation Authority and the Financial Conduct Authority. Until that approval is secured, it is not possible for the Council to progress any formal partnership or practical local delivery arrangements. We continue to monitor developments and will reconsider opportunities once regulatory milestones are met.
- **Credit Union Options:**
Officers have engaged with existing credit union providers operating within the wider Devon area to explore the feasibility of extending services into Torbay. While there is interest, providers have highlighted that establishing a physical presence requires a sustainable level of local membership and ongoing

financial viability. Work is continuing to assess demand, including the potential for community based access points rather than a full branch model.

- **Banking Hubs and Cash Access:**
The Council is actively engaged with national partners, including LINK and the Access to Cash Action Group, to identify suitable locations for banking hubs or enhanced Post Office banking facilities within Torbay. We have submitted evidence on the impact of recent branch closures, and we are currently awaiting the outcome of assessments undertaken by these bodies. Where opportunities arise, the Council will work with local stakeholders to facilitate the establishment of a hub in an appropriate location.

In summary, while progress has been constrained by national regulatory processes and the commercial decisions of financial institutions, the Council continues to work with regional and national partners to improve access to local banking options. We remain committed to supporting practical solutions that address residents' needs, and updates will be provided as further developments occur.

Question 23

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

Parents have raised concerns regarding the safety of pupils crossing Barewell Road outside of St Margarets School. Several have suggested a zebra crossing outside of the school to tackle this, in line with the Council's stated priority of school safety. Will the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking direct Highways to explore this and bring to the next Road Network and Transport Working Party?

Answer to Question 23 provided by Councillor Billings

The Road Network and Travel Working Party recommends to officers the annual Road Safety Initiatives programme and we will be considering priorities for the 2026/27 financial year in the summer. This timing is to allow SWISCo's Highways team the ability to incorporate the collision figures for 2025 as published by the Department for Transport. Any collision clusters can then be identified as main priorities for intervention.

Highways have advised the location concerned does not have a history of road traffic collisions and is covered by a 20mph speed limit. This zone has recently been extended through this administration's newly introduced 20mph zone for St Cuthbert Mayne school. They have also advised that the provision of controlled crossings, such as zebra crossings, need to be carefully considered and should not be located where there is no particular pedestrian desire line throughout the normal day, as crossings that are rarely used or only used at certain times of the day can often be ignored by drivers and can actually be more dangerous to pedestrians than when no crossing is present. Crossings will also require the removal of parking in the immediate vicinity. Highways have therefore advised that this is not likely to be

considered a suitable location for a controlled crossing, they have however noted the request as part of their annual review process.

Question 24

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

How will the Council intend to look at its green space and nature strategy to ensure that the Bay's green spaces are accessible to, and delivering for its residents?

Answer to Question 24 provided by Councillor Billings

The Council, with SWISCO, is actively assessing how it operates strategically on green and blue infrastructure to ensure that green and blue spaces deliver the ambitions of the Community and Corporate Plan.

Together, under new working arrangements which have been introduced following SWISCo taking responsibility for former TCCT land, we are seeking to develop a refreshed, joined-up way of working which recognises the multiple benefits green and blue spaces bring to Torbay and the local needs of the population. The ambition is to enrich our evidence base, strengthen our strategic approach, and improve how we work with our communities across Torbay, to ensure our greenspaces are accessible, inclusive and sustainable places which deliver for people and nature.

We are currently reviewing options on the scope for this, the resourcing support required and how we can deliver on that. By strengthening our cross-departmental approach, we will make better links to areas of work including transport and public health, which will benefit the consideration of access and impact.

Question 25

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

Public data on sexual and reproductive health services show considerable unmet need in Torbay. The most recent available data for Torbay Council shows that:

- In 2022, there were 1,516 conceptions in Torbay – of which 36.5% led to an abortion (compared to a national average of 29.7%)
- The rate of repeat abortions amongst under 25s was 31% in 2023 (compared to national average of 29%)
- 7 per 1,000 women were provided emergency contraception in sexual and reproductive health services in 2024/2025 (compared to a national average of 4 per 1,000) – including 11 per 1,000 13-to-15-year-old girls (the highest in the country)

I would welcome the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities reassurances on how the Council are tackling these issues.

Answer to Question 25 provided by Councillor Tranter

Torbay has seen a 40.4% reduction in the number of conceptions between 1998 and 2022 and a 33% reduction in the abortion rate. Despite this progress and the improvements made the figures referenced do indicate areas of significant unmet need and we remain diligent in our focus across all systems to maintain this downward trajectory. Torbay Council is actively addressing these challenges through a combination of improved access to high quality face to face and online clinical services and preventative measures. This was a key focus of a new contract for specialist sexual and reproductive health services that was implemented last year.

The drivers for teenage pregnancy are multi-factorial, and Torbay has been a historical outlier for all of the indicators outlined. The ongoing efforts to improve outcomes and to reduce the gap relative to national average are also multi-factorial.

We are working through our newly Public Health commissioned sexual and reproductive health provider, Devon Sexual Health to increase access to the full range of contraceptive options. Within this approach, there is a focus on improving access and uptake to long-acting reversible contraception (LARC).

Local provision includes a weekly dedicated youth drop-in clinic, expanding appointment availability in evenings, improving outreach, and strengthening pathways between primary care, pharmacies and specialist services.

Since 2023, a local condom distribution scheme for young people changed from being predominantly place based to a mix of place based (e.g. through some limited youth settings) and online where most of the service now occurs. This has led to a significant uptake of condoms being accessed by sexually active young people in Torbay. This access continues through the new integrated contract and is a successful innovation and adaptation.

Professional training and development for the children and young people's workforce has adapted and changed and continues to be offered to all those working with children and young people in Torbay. Uptake and professional practice delivery can vary but is regularly provided through The Eddystone Trust.

Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC) has had widespread coverage in Torbay, aimed at under 25-year-olds for many years due to Torbay Council initiatives. Since October 2025, this has been expanded by the Pharmacy First scheme and is now available to populations of all ages. This complements the availability of contraception also now available through Community Pharmacy settings. There are challenges in availability and access to contraception in Primary Care however, and partners are continuing to work with Primary Care Networks and GPs to remedy this.

We are improving the way we monitor trends locally to ensure that services respond rapidly to emerging needs. This includes working with NHS partners as part of the new integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health contract to improve data quality and

insights that drive action and used to monitor where these actions have impact, or needs remain unmet.

We recognise that reproductive health outcomes are shaped not only by services but also by pressures such as poverty, employment, housing instability, educational attainment, support for teenage parents, robust and evidence-based relationship and sex education in schools and digital access to name but a few. These factors are broadly a focus for all, but a detailed focus is often required in order to achieve a deeper impact.

Evidence suggests this includes leadership from schools and educational settings, targeted support for teenage parents, consistent messaging and service publicity for parents, professionals and young people, training on relationships and sexual health for professionals, advice and access to contraception and youth friendly services, accessible condom schemes, strong use of data and for targeted and early help to maintain a focus on supporting young people at all stages of adolescent development.

There is further work to do to engage wider partners within Torbay Council and in other key institutions and settings across Torbay to effectively address these long term and intergenerational issues. We wish to assure that improving sexual and reproductive health outcomes—particularly for young men and women and those at highest risk of poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes remains a priority for the Council. We are committed to tackling the underlying causes of these trends and ensuring residents have access to high-quality, timely, and responsive services.