

Tiverton Council Divided Over Plan to Revive Royal Navy Affiliation

August 4, 2025

— Categories: Defence & Security



Tiverton councillors reignited debate over civic-military ties during a heated meeting on 21 July, as they voted to explore re-establishing a formal affiliation with a Royal Navy ship. The motion prompted passionate arguments, with supporters highlighting tradition and community pride, and critics raising concerns about political implications and public division.

Councillor Ben Holdman introduced the motion and urged the council to restore the town's historic naval link, last held with HMS *Enterprise*. He said the affiliation boosted trade, strengthened community ties, and fostered civic pride. "We hold a proud history of working with our navy," he told the chamber. "This affiliation strengthens local identity and supports our town's economy."

Councillor Lance Kennedy supported the proposal and referenced his family's naval background. He recalled dining twice with the captain of HMS *Raleigh* and noted his father's service aboard HMS *Hardy*, which sank during the Battle of Narvik. "This motion reflects how we value our armed forces," he said.

Councillor Tim Bridger opposed the motion and warned it could divide the community. He argued that linking the council to the military sent a troubling signal. "Many in our town would feel alienated by this affiliation," he said. "I believe the government is complicit in a genocide, and aligning with the military under these circumstances sends the wrong message."

Councillor Les Cruwys cautioned that re-establishing the connection would not be straightforward. He explained that Tiverton's past link to HMS *Hermes* resulted from a councillor's relationship with a government minister. He said modern affiliations often involve complex logistics and formal procedures. "We cannot simply ask for a ship and expect an immediate response," he added.

Councillor Holdman clarified that the motion did not endorse government policy. He said the aim was to support the Royal Navy as an institution and honour its role in national service. "This motion is not political, it recognises the contribution of our armed forces," he stated.

