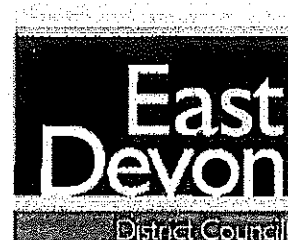


Date: 8th March 2017
Contact number: 01395 517417
E-mail: hgordonlennox@eastdevon.gov.uk
Our Reference: HGL/HTC/mediation offer
Your Reference:



Honiton Town Council
Council Office
The Beehive
Dowell St
Honiton
EX14 1LZ

East Devon District Council
Knowle
Sidmouth
Devon
EX10 8HL

DX 48705 Sidmouth

Tel: 01395 516551

Fax: 01395 517501

www.eastdevon.gov.uk

FAO: The Deputy Clerk

Dear Deputy Clerk,

Offer of mediation

I write following recent correspondence which has highlighted concerns in respect of the financial affairs of Honiton Town Council, more specifically the need to have in post a Responsible Financial Officer. I am also aware of ongoing issues around the Beehive following the legal proceedings brought by Cllr Taylor.

In light of the recent proceedings and ongoing issues around the Beehive, I am concerned about how the public are likely to be viewing Honiton Town Council, its actions and the role of its Members. It does seem that Councillors are generally divided and this is impacting on the ability to carry out the functions of the Council properly. I cite the inability to take a decision to appoint a Responsible Financial Officer as one such example, which bearing in mind the legal requirements in this regard should be a matter that is dealt with expeditiously.

I should reiterate that it is not the District Council's role to police Town or Parish Council activity. However, as Monitoring Officer, I have a responsibility in respect of Councillor conduct and so it seems prudent to me to try and offer some assistance to help the Town Council move forward so that the public can have confidence in what it is doing.

There are two options which I think could assist. Firstly, with the imminent election and three new Councillors starting, there could be some training given to reinforce the roles of the Council and the Councillors as well as detail on the decision making process together with other aspects of the legal framework. This could be provided by NALC or DALC and is something that Honiton Town Council could arrange for itself, if Members were in agreement. Secondly, and with the Beehive specifically in mind, there could be some mediation between the Members to help them move forwards and come more together for the benefit of Honiton Town Council as a whole.

East Devon District Council is willing to pay for a suitably qualified and independent mediator to carry out this process if the Members considered it would be of benefit. We would also seek to ensure that the mediator understood the intricacies of local government as clearly this is hugely relevant to trying to move things forward.

I trust that this offer will be taken in the spirit it is made – one of trying to help and not criticise. I look forward to hearing from you if your Members consider that mediation would be of benefit.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'HGL', written in a cursive style.

Henry Gordon Lennox
Strategic Lead (Governance and Licensing) and Monitoring Officer