

HONITON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 20 April 2015 at the Council Offices, The Beehive, Dowell Street, Honiton, commencing at 7.00 p.m.

Members present**St Michael's Ward**

Cllr Gary Elliot
 Cllr Peter Halse (Chair) **
 Cllr Sharon Pavey
 Cllr John Taylor
 Cllr Jackie Wadsworth

St Paul's Ward

Cllr Les Bayliss
 Cllr Henry Brown
 Cllr Peter Corke
 Cllr Caroline Kolek
 Cllr John Zarczynski

** Also District Councillor

1 resident
 2 press – Jack Dixon (Pulmans) and Callum Lawton (Midweek Herald)
 Town Clerk
 Deputy Town Clerk

57. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed the Elector to the meeting and introduced the Councillors.

58. Mayor's Report

Cllr Halse reported.

The Town Council has been working to improve our community and the lives of those who live in it by improving the facilities in our open spaces, our sports, our play areas.

We have worked with EDDC in putting forward 3 projects that met the eligibility criteria for s106 funding. As the cost did not exceed the amount available (approx £50,000) all projects were supported resulting in a new petanque pitch, an improved and safer spectator area for rugby matches and the development of a sports wall.

In addition local schools have been contacted with regards to the play projects and three play parks have been identified for improvements. The play areas in order of priority:

- . Langford Avenue
- . Butts Close
- . Streamers Meadow

The next steps will be to produce various designs and the local schools will be asked to select their favourite.

The Town Council has been involved in various consultations relating to cutbacks in services and on each occasion has strongly objected to the proposals.

The past year your town council has as been working very hard on your behalf including producing our Talk of the Town newsletter every quarter, the marshalling of Hot Pennies, Charter day, Armed Forces, working closely with the Chamber of Commerce promoting the Town and it's businesses.

This year saw the start of making Honiton a dementia friendly town, Honiton Together Project to improve communications between various volunteers and organisations and the newly formed Honiton Youth Group.

The Town Council has also been able to assist many local groups with grants. Many people are involved and work hard to run and support these groups and I would like to thank each one on behalf of us for all that they do. We have continued to support the young people and obtained funding for two qualified youth workers to manage one session per week at the Youth Centre. We have also provided assistance to many of the Town's services such as Tourist Information Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, Honiton Antiques Festival, Food Bank and TRIP in order that they may continue with their work.

Councillors continue being involved in essential community organisations such as Charter Day, Hot Pennies, community cinema, Roundball Wood, The Glen and Millennium Green to name but a few.

Signed Chair

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The Town Council has also been busy in preparation for a neighbourhood plan specifically relating to Honiton to ensure your views are taken into account through various consultations.

Much of the Town Council's time this year has been taken with ensuring proper process and obtaining professional advice regarding decisions on the management of Honiton Community Complex and I would like to thank all those dedicated people who have worked tirelessly towards this.

The Beehive, Honiton's Community Complex has been in operation for just over 12 months and I would like to thank all the Directors of the company who will be managing the Beehive and the many volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure that a variety of activities and events take place. I have every confidence in the Directors and I am positive they will continue to do a wonderful job of ensuring these facilities are available for all members of the community.

I would particularly like to thank the deputy and chair of the planning committee, John Zarczynski , Gary Elliot for chairing the Policy Committee and Les Bayliss for chairing the Finance Committee and to councillors, Vivienne Ash, Nick Cornwell, Gary Elliot, Sharon Pavey and Nick Boggon who are all standing down.

I would also like to thank the Town Crier, Dave Retter, who is a real credit to the Town acting as an ambassador for Honiton throughout the country.

Finally I would like to thank the council staff for all their hard work and dedication to the Council.

59. Minutes of the last Town Meeting

The minutes of the Town Meeting held on 17 April 2014 were signed and received in evidence without further proof.

60. Policy & Finance Committee Report

Cllr Elliot reported.

The purpose of the Policy Committee is to give the Council a forum in which to consider issues in more detail than a full time Council meeting would allow and issues can be debated at length. When more time is needed to prepare a detailed response to a consultation for example, we are able to set up working groups to formulate a response based on the discussions that took place in the Policy meeting. The Policy Committee does not have delegated powers, however; once an item has been discussed, the committee can only make recommendations, which need to be ratified by a full Council meeting. The Policy Committee also reviews the Council's own internal policies to ensure they are kept up to date with the latest legislation and guidance from East Devon District Council (EDDC) as well as organisations such as the Devon Association of Local Councils.

In the past year the Policy Committee has formulated responses to several consultations concerning cutbacks in public services provided by Devon County Council (DCC) and EDDC. We strongly opposed higher charges to be levied for the disposal of items at Devon's recycling centres. We strongly opposed any cutbacks to EDDC waste collections - in fact we urged them to increase what they collect to include cardboard and mixed plastics to further reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. We strongly opposed cutbacks to the road gritting and snow clearing services. We strongly opposed cutbacks in bus services subsidised by DCC, again we urged them to improve services within Honiton.

To help the Council engage more with the people of Honiton, last summer we held a series of 'meet your Councillor' sessions on the High Street. Common themes that came up were pot holes in the road and grass cutting on roadside verges. These issues were pursued with the relevant authorities.

On a final positive note, the Policy Committee was able to make recommendations to the Council with regards to the Parishes Together funding provided jointly by EDDC and DCC. This year we proposed using the money to help fund qualified youth workers at the Youth Centre after it was closed and to provide a number of sessions with a mobile garden providing therapy for the elderly.

61. Report of the Finance Committee

Cllr Bayliss reported.

The finance committee usually meet on a quarterly basis, with additional meeting as required. The purpose of the committee is to review all financial matters which relate to council activities including staff issues. The committee have met 7 times during this financial period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015 and have made several recommendations to full council for their approval. At quarterly meeting members view all cheques that have been issued during the period as well as scrutinising the quarterly Income and expenditure details and the reconciliation report. Other matters that have passed through the finance committee during this period are:

- New signage

Signed Chair

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- Staff pension changes
- The councils risk management register
- Addition borrowing requirements in relation to the building of the Beehive.
- Grants for community groups.
- Review of the councils asset register
- Proposal for a new council storage area.
- Member's allowances.
- Review of financial audit reports
- Annual Budget/Precept forecast

Budget/Precept

Over the past few years setting the council budget/precept has been difficult set against the national austerity measures taken by central government. The finance committee are well aware of the financial impact any increase in the precept has on the community, however, the committee have to ensure that sufficient funds are available for the council to meet its obligations to the community. This year (2015/16) the precept has been increased by 2.8%, which equates to an increase of approximately £1.56 per year per household. The precept was set against a further reduction of the EDDC Council Tax grant of 15%. Towards the later part of 2014/15 period financial questions regarding the interim payments and the final account for the building of the Beehive have been debated by the finance committee. As a result of the debates it was recommended to full council to draw down the PWLB loan of £98,000. This loan is to be used to (a) to cover costs used to pay some of the variations in building costs, (b) to pay any remaining building costs associated with the final building accounts. Many of the variations in building costs are under dispute with the contractors, project management team and the council. The loan repayment did not add any additional costs to the 2015/16 precept.

During the 2014/15 financial period money from the precept was used to cover the annual expenditure for providing administration, staffing, marketing and environmental services to the town. Funding was also made available for providing grants to various community organisations such as:

- Tourist Information centre.
- Citizen Advice Bureau
- Youth Support
- Charter Day
- Hot Pennies
- Christmas Lights.
- Community groups.

The total money given in grants during 2014 was £12,650

This coming financial year 2015/16 will see further grants being awarded to various community groups and organisations.

It is hoped that income can be generated from the car park at Dowell Street which was acquired in the transfer of land from East Devon to build the Beehive.

The finance committee will continue to oversee expenditure and other financial issues when they arise and where appropriate make all necessary recommendations to council. It will strive to maintain stability and financial openness to the community.

62. Planning Committee Report

Cllr Zarczynski reported.

Firstly I would like to thank the members of the Planning Committee for their dedication and commitment to fulfilling the Town Council's role as a consultee on planning applications for the town and parish of Honiton.

In particular I would like to thank Cllrs Gary Elliot and Nick Boggon for their work and support as they will not be standing again for re-election in May 2015.

The Planning Committee has continued to meet fortnightly and, by the year end, had considered 115 applications for various private dwellings, business premises, tree works, advert applications and works to listed buildings or buildings in the Honiton Conservation Area.

All Town Councillors receive the agenda and are able to attend and speak at meetings, but only members of the Committee may vote. This has continued to work well in that it allows all Councillors to participate where applications for larger scale development are under discussion. Members of the public also have

the opportunity to attend and participate in Committee meetings and this involvement is welcomed and appreciated.

The Town Council has continued to follow progress with the new East Devon Local Plan following last year's enquiry and remains committed to playing a full part in planning issues for the wider area. Good working relationships with the neighbouring parishes of Gittisham and Awliscombe have been maintained and it is anticipated that all three parishes will consult and work together on planning and neighbourhood planning matters where it is appropriate to do so.

The Planning Committee, representing the Town Council, was able to support the outline application for up to 150 new homes on land at Ottery Moor Lane and will continue to work to ensure that Honiton is a good place to live, work and conduct business.

63. Open Forum

Q. Jill McNally – Where was the play area in Streamer Meadow mentioned earlier?

A. The play area was near the Bowling Green at the bottom end of Streamers Meadow.

Q. Jill McNally – The Food Bank service mentioned was an excellent service but was saddened to hear about the desperate need for one?

A. On average the demand for food from the food bank has increased by 30% in the last year and that was why the Council felt it should show its support by providing the much needed grant.

Q. Jill McNally – When will cardboard be re-cycled?

A. East Devon District Council had this in hand and were in discussion with contractors and were hoping to trial later this year.

Q. Cllr Kolek asked about the Community Complex, home of Honiton Town Council sign and when it was likely to be erected.

A. This was in hand and the Council will be receiving a progress report shortly.

Q. Jill McNally – How much was awarded in grants in previous year?

A. The amount (£19623.41) was slightly larger to this year as an additional £3393.71 had been transferred from earmarked reserves for local organisation support.

64. Close of Meeting

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and thanked all the Councillors for their hard work this past year.

Meeting closed at 7.40pm