

HONITON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 15th April 2019 at the Town Council Offices,
The Beehive, Dowell Street, Honiton commencing at 7.00pm

Present

St Michael's Ward

Cllr Sheila Edwards
Cllr Philip Carrigan
Cllr N Macve
Cllr John Zarczynski

St Paul's Ward

Cllr Henry Brown (Chairman)
Cllr Terry Darrant
Cllr Vera Howard
Cllr Roy Coombs
Cllr Mike Jones
Cllr Duncan Sheridan-Shaw
Cllr Roy Coombs

Also present

6 members of the public
Mark Tredwin – Town Clerk
Heloise Marlow – Deputy Town Clerk

89 Town Mayor's Welcome

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

90 Introduction of Town Councillors

The Mayor introduced the Councillors.

91 To approve the minutes of the previous Town Meeting held on 16th April 2018

The minutes were approved by those who had been present as a true record of the meeting.

92 Town Mayor's Report

Cllr Brown reported:

93 Finance Committee Report

Cllr Carrigan reported:

94 Policy Committee Report

Cllr Edwards reported:

95 Planning Committee Report

Cllr Coombs reported:

96 Open Forum

96/1 A member of the public asked whether the Council had any plans to introduce microphones in the TIRRARD Room as the acoustics were so bad.

Signed Chairman

Cllr Brown confirmed that there was a hearing loop.

Cllr Zarczynski referred to the new EDDC offices Blackdown House which has sensors in the walls instead of microphones. The hearing loop in the Turrard Room has been tested and is working.

The Town Clerk advised that there was the issue of cost. The management of the Beehive is a matter for Honiton Community Complex. Members do need to sit around a table for Council meetings.

96/2 A member of the public advised that whilst he appreciated Purdah was in force as a tax payer of Honiton he wished to put forward his opinion regarding Cllr Zarczynski and Taylor. Their behaviour over the last 12 months had been pathetic and they should be ashamed by their vilification of the Mayor. Their letters to the paper were disgraceful. The Beehive was a wonderful facility and over the last 6 year he had attended many events with friends. The £50,000 which the Council had set aside in respect of possible legal costs in relation to the dispute with Honiton Community Complex was appalling in order to save £20,000 which would support the building. Both Councillors were pathetic and should take a good hard look at themselves as they were not helping the people of Honiton.

The Town Clerk reminded Councillors and members of the public that they were in purdah and as such the two councillors would not be able to respond. However, the decision to go to arbitration was not made by Councillors and is based on inaccurate information. He has taken a clean sheet of paper and has put together an independent report on the matter. There are inaccuracies in the information provided by the Beehive and the Council's solicitors agree. Everyone agrees that the matter should not go to arbitration but as the Council's RFO, the Town Clerk said that he had no choice but to set aside the monies and that the Council agreed to it at his request. The Town Clerk advised that the lease superseded all previous agreements and it is the lease which is under scrutiny. The Town Clerk is still hoping to avoid the matter going to Arbitration and he has the support of Councillors but ultimately the decision rests with HCC. The Council have delegated the authority to the Town Clerk and the solicitors to resolve the issues although the Town Clerk will always discuss the matter fully with Councillors. In defence of Clls Zarczynski and Taylor, they have both been very supportive of the efforts to bring the matter to an end.

Another member of the public stated that the Town Council were being economical with the truth and that the issues related to the lack of operating procedures in place for the running of the Beehive.

The Town Clerk again reiterated that it is the lease which is legally binding. He is not distorting the truth and that there is no point in going over history.

Cllr Taylor responded by reminding those present that 6 years ago the Beehive was planned to be in the Lace Walk car park. However, EDDC then removed the land and all the Councillors then gave up except one who threatened legal action against EDDC. The current board of HCC were not involved in that battle and the Councillor

who lobbied EDDC for the land on which the Beehive is not sited was himself. As such the Beehive exists because of him.

Cllr Zarczynski advised that he as portrayed as anti-Beehive. In fact when he joined the Council in 2011 with Cllrs Howard and Coombs, he forced the Council to make the decision to proceed with the building. He is not anti-Beehive.

Cllr Carrigan advised that many are misunderstanding the dispute with HCC as being for or against the Beehive. But that is not the issue – it is the management of the Beehive which is the problem not the building.

A member of the public queried the dispute with Baily Partnership 6 years after the building tender was accepted.

The Town Clerk advised that he could not discuss this in public but could confirm that a letter had gone to Baily Partnership's solicitors with an independent expert report and copy evidence. The Town Clerk has looked at the evidence and there were clear errors as found by the independent expert. If this member of the public wished to discuss the matter in private he would welcome to come and see the Town Clerk.

A member of the public referred to Cllr Edward's policy report. She was disappointed that the Cllr Edwards was not standing again for Council and she hoped that another Councillor would replace her as the NALC and DALC representative. As regards the stagnation of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Community Engagement Forum was not set up to prop up the Neighbourhood Plan. The CEF was set up by voluntary groups to get things going between the groups. It was a different body set up to carry out projects.

Cllr Brown advised that the new Council would be looking again at the NP.

Cllr Edwards confirmed that she and Cllr Coombs did try and get the CEF back up and running but there were communication issues which stopped this and she apologised for this.

Cllr Coombs advised that on the HTC website there is a link between the CEF and the NP. One aspect of the CEF was to help the NP Steering Group to deliver the NP. In June 2018 the NP Steering Group asked for the CEF to meet but then the NP Steering Group collapsed as there were not enough community members. He understands that there are now at least 8 volunteers willing to join the steering group but of course this will now be something for the new Council to deal with. The new Council could decide not to pursue a Neighbourhood Plan but now that some community volunteers have come forward and there are Cllrs willing to be on the steering committee, in theory the new Council can look at this again.

As regards the Beehive Cllr Coombs sees it as an asset to Honiton and the area. He was against the building originally as it diverted money away from the Battishorne Community Centre.

A member of the public expressed his thanks to the Mayor and Councillors for their hard work especially as they also get a lot of criticism.

A member of the public asked about the current policy for Honoured Citizen Awards – have these been changed? The Town Clerk confirmed that this was being looked at.

The Mayor thanked those present for attending and invited all members of the public to the Mayor Making next month.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.

DRAFT