

**Honiton Town Council
Policy Committee**

Minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held at the Town Council Offices, The Beehive, Dowell Street, Honiton on Monday 27th June 2016

Members present

St Michael's Ward

Cllr S Edwards (Chairman)
Cllr D Perkins

St Paul's Ward

Cllr P Halse
Cllr C Kolek
Cllr J Lake
Cllr K Smith

In Attendance

Cllr Roy Coombs
Cllr K Hopkins
Cllr V Howard

Chetna Jones - Town Clerk

Meeting commenced at 9.10pm

16/32 To receive apologies for absence

Cllr A Alder (P), Cllr C Melbourne (P), Cllr A Mountjoy (A/L), Cllr J Wadsworth and Cllr J Taylor (P).

16/33 To receive declarations of interest and receipt of request for new DPI dispensations on items on the agenda

No declarations were received.

16/34 Confidential / exempt items

There were no items to be dealt with in this way.

The Chairman declared the meeting out of session

16/35 Public Question Time on items on the agenda

The Town Clerk confirmed there were no public questions.

Part A matters for decisions

16/36 To determine the Town Council involvement for delivering TIC to Honiton

A copy of the notes from Cllr Mountjoy was circulated at the meeting and sufficient time was given to members to read the report.

Cllr Edwards confirmed that this matter was being raised as the feasibility study was not being progressed at present. It was considered important that the Council be asked if it is interested in delivering Tourist Service of any kind.

Concern was also raised about the Town Guide and future plans for Honiton Tourist Information Centre Ltd including the vacant building.

The Policy Committee requested that a vote of thanks be recorded for the work that Cllr Mountjoy has carried out and that serious consideration be given to progressing this matter. In addition continuity was needed to maintain the website and respond to enquiries.

Cllr Kolek left meeting.

Recommendation

<p>That quotes be obtained from organisations such as Cosmic to deliver and maintain a new website as per the feasibility study recommendations and as a short term solution the Town Council consider employing current Town Council reception staff to maintain the existing website for up to half an hour per day (cost to be identified by Town Clerk)</p>

16/37 To develop social media and a new Town Council website based on .gov.uk guidelines

It was unanimously agreed that this matter be pursued. It was also noted that the new website will be at no additional costs to the Council as this was part of Core Office's package deal.

16/38 To review the 4th Edition Good Councillor Guide

Members felt that the one of the most important aspects of the guide was the understanding of the decision making process. Councillors need to take on board that decisions made by the majority are decisions of the Corporate Body. Councillors are expected to make informed decisions by ensuring they have prepared for the meeting, attended the meeting with an open mind and listened to the debate before deciding on which way to vote. Whatever their vote all Councillors were expected to accept the decision as final.

It was also noted that Councillors cannot disassociate themselves from a decision of the Council inasmuch as in a democracy, the majority decision is accepted. Councillors were elected to make decisions on behalf of the electorate and should refrain from abstaining. Where a majority decision is determined, the abstained vote is deemed to approve the decision.

Councillors were able to request an individual record of how they voted but this was not to disassociate themselves from the decision of the Council.

It was suggested that advice from Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC) was considered legal advice but this was not agreed by all as it was felt by some members that the advice would have to be at risk with a monetary value and DALC did not provide this reassurance.

Recommendation

<p>That the following extract from the Good Councillor guide be noted by the Town Council:</p>

10. At the meeting

What if you cannot attend? Remember, you have a duty to attend but sometimes things crop up and you are unable to make it. You must contact the clerk with an apology and explanation. A darts match is not an adequate excuse whereas illness or work commitments are acceptable reasons. If you fail to attend any meetings for six months, you will automatically cease to be a councillor unless the council approved your reason for absence before the end of the six month period.

It is, of course, the chairman's job to manage the meeting by introducing agenda items, inviting members to speak, focusing discussion and clarifying matters for decision. Councillors, having engaged in discussion, vote for or against the proposal by a show of hands. Matters to be decided are called proposals or motions. Decisions, called resolutions, are recorded in the minutes as, for example, *"It was resolved that the council will contribute*

£2000 to the community bus scheme.” If you have no view on a proposal, or cannot decide, you can abstain, but you shouldn’t do this too frequently. Normally voters’ names are not minuted but if necessary, you can ask for names to be recorded. Remember that council decisions are corporate decisions.

You should keep contributions short and to the point; you probably don’t enjoy listening to others who speak for too long. Always work through the chairman and try not to score points off fellow councillors. Never engage in personal attacks on others – however tempting. If you can add a dash of humour and common sense to the proceedings then you will be a pleasure to work with.

The council must advertise the meetings by putting up public notices; electors have a right to attend. You may be wondering when they have their say. Many councils encourage members of the public to speak and ask questions in a short, defined period, early in the meeting.

The meeting must remain quorate at all times, so if you need to leave during a council meeting always warn your clerk and chairman beforehand.

That the Town Council receives and accepts the amended Good Councillor Guide.

16/39 To close the meeting

The meeting was closed at 10.10pm.