

HONITON TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Council Offices,
The Beehive, Dowell Street, Honiton on Monday 14th October 2019 at 7.00 pm**

Present

St Michael's Ward

Cllr M Pollington
Cllr J Taylor
Cllr J Zarczynski (Chairman)
Cllr D Sheridan-Shaw
Cllr J Hannay
Cllr N Macve
Cllr J McNally
Cllr J Wyatt

St Paul's Ward

Cllr T Darrant
Cllr V Howard
Cllr R Coombs
Cllr P Carrigan
Cllr C Hattle-Spence
Cllr C Kolek
Cllr R Hanratty
Cllr C A Gilson

In attendance

Cllr P Twiss DCC/EDDC
Cllr T McCollum EDDC
Mark Tredwin, Honiton Town Clerk
Heloise Marlow, Deputy Town Clerk
100+ members of the public
2 members of the press

PART A

19/945 The Chairman welcomed Councillors and members of the public and congratulated Cllr Gilson on being awarded her British Empire medal for services to the community in Honiton.

19/946 To receive apologies for absence

Cllr D Barrow (personal reasons)
Cllr L Jeffery (personal reasons)
Cllr N Hannay (personal reasons)

19/947 To receive declarations of interest and receipt of requests for new DPI dispensations on items on the agenda

There were no declarations of interest

19/948 To note the grant of dispensations made by the Town Clerk in relation to the business of this meeting.

None were made.

19/949 Public question time on items on the agenda

The Chairman advised that members of the public were invited to put forward any public questions relating to all items on the Agenda except item 15. Public Questions regarding item 15 would be taken prior to that item being debated.

Mr Burgess requested that item 15 be moved to the start of the agenda. The Town

Clerk advised that the item has been placed at the end of the Agenda to allow maximum time for debate.

Mrs Howe suggested that for the benefit of the members of the public in attendance the Clerk should make it clear that when referring to Honiton Community Complex he is referring to the Beehive management. The Town Clerk confirmed this and was supported by the Chairman who also confirmed that references to the Beehive meant the Beehive management.

There were no public questions relating to items 1 – 14 of the Agenda

19/950 Mayor's announcements

The Mayor confirmed that he had attended the following events in August and September:

Trip AGM meeting and Tesco sports cheque presentation shoot
 Honiton Ambulance Station open day
 Gate to Plate
 Police Awards in Exeter
 Presented 100-year Birthday telegram from the Queen to a resident of Sunningdale House in Honiton.

19/951 To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 9th September 2019.

A copy of the minutes of the meeting had been circulated in advance. The minutes were approved unanimously.

19/952 Reports from District and County Councillors

Cllr Phil Twiss presented the following report:

Highways

Let's start with resident's favourite subject of potholes. I am pleased to report that recorded numbers this year are down from last year and are below the monthly average since 2016, heading in the right direction.

August 2019 was 1826, September 2019 month to date 1910,
 2016 figures for comparison, 3872 and, 2150
 2017 figures for comparison, 3320 and, 2760
 2018 figures for comparison 4384, 3312

In short well down on previous years.

As the nights begin to draw in final preparations are being made for winter, with delivery of 8500 tonnes of salt due in the next few weeks to ensure by early October the salt barns are

fully stocked at 23,500 tonnes. The glitters and snow blowers are all serviced and ready for action, but as always, I am hoping they won't be called upon for use.

DCC Highways has been considering carbon reduction and have been using in a number of locations 'warm asphalt', which provides an approximate 7.5 % carbon reduction over hot lay. This technology is beginning to move forward, and we now have two plants in Devon that are capable of supplying material.

This year's surface dressing programme is now complete and consisted of approximately 1.06 million sqm and delivered by Kiely Bros Ltd. The programme commenced on 8 April 2019 and was divided into three main phases to maximise programme efficiency, network demand and client/contractor expectation.

The "Doing What Matters" trial work on asset management continues in Okehampton, with the work and approach methods being used proving very effective. Work has also started on safety defects elsewhere, after the success of the triage "Doing What Matters" on publicly reported potholes using the DCC "Report a Problem web site.

Adult Social care and Health Services

Spending Review

In the September [Spending Review](#) the Chancellor announced an extra £1.5 billion extra for social care. This breaks down as £1 billion in grants and a further £0.5 billion would come in the form of powers to raise 2% from Council Tax as a Social Care Precept. Depending on the distribution formula used for the grant element, Devon can expect around £15 million with the possibility of a further £7 million potential raised through a Social Care Precept.

Long Term Care Plan for Devon

The engagement activity of the summer has now come to an end and officers are now analysing the findings and what this might mean for the development of the Devon Long Term Plan.

The Adult Health and Care Scrutiny Committee is hosting a Long-Term Plan session on 18 October which will provide further opportunities to help to develop the Long term Plan for Devon.

Primary Care Networks

31 Primary Care Networks have just been set-up across Devon. GP practices have worked with social care, the voluntary and community sector and across the wider NHS family for many years. The development of PCNs further supports this and also supports GP practices to work together across multiple communities.

Over the next three years it is anticipated that each PCN will contain a team consisting of pharmacists, social prescribing link workers, physiotherapists, physicians and paramedics and offer services and support that has been traditionally provided in hospitals. PCNs will also be working to provide enhanced care within care homes. For more information on

PCNs, the King's Fund has produced a really concise and plain English guide at <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/primary-care-networks-explained> which sets out what PCNs are and what they hope to achieve.

Proud to care staff recruitment campaign

Proud to Care Devon will be running a further marketing recruitment [campaign](#) to support the recruitment of care workers in Devon from September – December. This

Winter Pressures

Work is underway to allocate the winter pressures grant money of £3.6M. It is allocated to each locality and used to fund specific projects.

Children's Services and Schools

We have 771 children in care, and pressure remains high on the system. The availability of placements and the right sort of placement is a continuing challenge. Foster Carer recruitment has improved. Over the last two years we have recruited 50 new Foster Families and lost no Foster Carers following our re-structuring of allowances.

School Funding

Following many months of campaigning by Parents, Schools, Local Authorities and F40, government announced a three-year settlement for education: -

The school's budget will rise by £2.6 billion in 2020-21, £4.8 billion in 2021-22 and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to 2019-20 funding levels.

Per pupil funding to rise, at least in line with inflation to a minimum of £3750 for primary schools and £5,000 for secondary schools, including Devon

£700m more funding to support children with Special Educational Needs

£400m for FE provision including £190m to increase core funding for 16-19-year olds and £210m for target interventions such as English and Maths re-sits, T levels, the Advanced Maths Premium and workforce investments

There is clearly political uncertainty at the moment, but these announcements are a good baseline for next year, whatever happens.

Cllr R Hanratty referred to a tweet from Mendip Council which was offering free carparking in all its carparks on the 7th December 2019 – could the same be offered in Honiton for one day only?

Cllr Twiss advised that his report was in relation to Devon County Council matters but there is currently a big debate ongoing at EDDC in respect of parking charges. EDDC has to look at its budget and the risk is that other services will be cut.

Cllr Coombs raised the issue of the drainage gullies in the High Street and a recent letter setting out what action was being proposed by Devon County Council.

Cllr Twiss advised that the gullies were decorative only and there were ongoing discussions with the Consultant involved.

Cllr Macve advised that the gully near the Fish and Chip shop in the High Street was a serious trip hazard and warned others to be careful.

Cllr T McCollum presented the following report:

Gate to Plate – this was very successful. The weather held out with thousands turning out and was enjoyed by all. A big thanks to all involved especially the volunteers.

Lace Walk Car Park – discussions are ongoing re the proposal to increase the parking fees in the main car parks across East Devon to £1.20 per hour.

Electric car charging points – A 2 year £1.3m joint project to install at least 25 electric vehicle charging points across Devon starts this month, scheduled to be completed by December 2021.

Cllr Kolek queried how many charging points would there be in Lace Walk car park? Cllr McCollum confirmed that there would be a minimum of 2.

Cllr Zarczynski thanked Cllr McCollum for his assistance with Gate to Plate.

Cllr P Twiss left the meeting at 7.20pm

19/953 Reports from Councillors with Special Responsibilities

None were received.

19/954 Update Report

The Clerk presented the update report.

Cllr Kolek asked whether the Clerk had yet written to the Electoral Commission and the Town Clerk confirmed that he had not yet done so.

Cllr Hanratty queried whether given the response received from South West Councils, it was still necessary to write to the Electoral Commission over what he viewed was a divisive and the result of a vindictive motive against a staff member

which had proved to be a total waste of time and should never occur again in the future.

Cllr Zarczynski denied that the query was vindictive. A councillor had raised a possible conflict of interest involving the Council which needed to protect itself from conflicts in the future and as such took all necessary steps to obtain advice. The matter was not personal or political but necessary to protect the Council.

The Town Clerk confirmed that he would write to the Electoral Commission to obtain their advice but hoped that the matter would end there.

Cllr Kolek also queried the need to write to the Electoral Commission in view of the advice now received from South West Councils. Cllr Zarczynski confirmed that Council had resolved to seek advice from the Electoral Commission as well as South West Councils and therefore this would need to be done.

PART A MATTERS FOR DECISION

19/955 Planning Committee and Town Management Committee Minutes

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to receive the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on the 17th September and 1st October 2019.

Proposed by Cllr Taylor and seconded by Cllr Sheridan-Shaw.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to receive the minutes of the Town Management Committee meeting on the 23rd September 2019.

Proposed by Cllr Sheridan-Shaw and seconded by Cllr Zarczynski.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously that the sum of £1,875.00 be awarded to Additional Needs Sports Group to assist with the provision of sports activities for children with additional needs.

Proposed by Cllr Sheridan-Shaw and seconded by Cllr Zarczynski.

19/956 Committee Membership and representation on outside bodies

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously for the following changes to be made to Council Committees and representation on outside bodies:

Finance and Policy Committee

Cllrs Hanratty and Gilson added.

Town Management Committee

Cllrs Jason Hannay, James Wyatt, Carol Gilson and Ray Hanratty added.

Green and Open Spaces Committee

Cllrs Jason Hannay and James Wyatt added.

Allotments Working Group

Cllr Ray Hanratty added.

Christmas Lights Working Group

Cllr Taylor added.

Outside Bodies

Citizens Advice – Cllr Macve

Proposed by Cllr Kolek and seconded by Cllr Macve.

Cllr Kolek suggested that next year Councillors should do a presentation at the Annual Town Meeting explaining why they wish to be the Council's representative for the Outside Bodies listed.

19/957 Grants Process 2019-20

The Town Clerk presented the report.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to agree the proposed grant process and the associated application form.

Proposed by Cllr Sheridan-Shaw and seconded by Cllr Zarczynski.

19/958 Climate Action report

Cllr Kolek presented the report and advised that the next step would be to set a date for a public meeting which she and Cllr Wyatt hoped would see a high turnout.

Members noted the intended actions of the Climate Action Working Group and **RESOLVED** unanimously to accept the proposed Terms of Reference for the Working Group.

Proposed by Cllr Kolek and seconded by Cllr Wyatt.

Cllr Taylor offered his assistance to Cllrs Kolek and Wyatt.

19/959 Members' Allowances

The Town Clerk presented the report.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously that officers make arrangements for Members' Allowances to be paid with the October wages.

Proposed by Cllr McNally and seconded by Cllr Coombs.

19/960 Beehive Dispute

Cllr Zarczynski confirmed that this item was now open to Public Questions:

A member of the public requested that for future meetings, the public have either hard copies of the Agenda or for the Agenda to be shown on a big screen.

This was noted.

The Town Clerk confirmed that he had received a number of questions by email with the first from Mrs Marjorie-Anne Howe.

Mrs Howe started by saying that she was delighted that the matter was being discussed in Part A of the meeting. The Town Clerk's report was a very comprehensive document although some may feel it is partisan. There has been much concern and distress with the majority not party to all the discussions. Where do the parties go from here? The Town Council says that it won't or cannot pay what HCC are asking and HCC say that they cannot carry on without funding. The matter needs to be sorted out as there is a positive desire for the Beehive to continue functioning. Her question was:

Is this Council willing to make a one-off payment to the Beehive on a without prejudice basis which will allow it to continue for the next 3 months which will provide an immediate solution to the problem with a long term solution to be discussed as there needs to be a new perspective brought to the matter from all sides to find a solution as to the way forward?

Cllr Zarczynski thanked Mrs Howe for her question and advised that rather than answering each public question individually he hoped that the debate which followed would provide the answers.

Mr John Burgess asked how many letters the Council had received from members of the public in relation to the issue? The Town Clerk confirmed that approximately 70 letters had been received – although some were duplicates which had been copied and pasted. He had been handed tonight a petition with 429 signatures.

Mrs Serena Sexton asked if the 15 minutes allocated to public questions could be extended and Cllr Zarczynski agreed that he would agree to a further 15 minutes.

The following are the questions received in advance by the Town Clerk:

Mr Martin Staniforth –

"Given that we all want the Beehive, the HTC and Honiton to thrive, what is the HTC's suggested process to resolve this dispute, within what timeframe and what is/are the key obstacles to be overcome by the Beehive and the HTC?"

"Have / will the HTC and the HCC each set out their proposals / projections / expectations for all annual payments for the remainder of the lease? If not, would this be a useful exercise so that both parties can see how far apart they are?"

Amelia Kyriakou –

"Over the past five years The Beehive has been somewhere young people like me go for leisure and learning through the various groups and events that use the building. With the current running of The Beehive comes the assurance that decisions and plans are being made with groups such as Honiton Community Theatre Company in mind, so that we may continue to experience what they offer us.

What assurances can you give that the community will continue to be considered in this way if The Beehive is no longer run by HCC?"

Warren Oak –

I am writing to you in support of the Beehive Community Centre. It's a wonderful venue used by young and old throughout the town and local villages. The Mayor of Honiton does not speak on my behalf, how dare he hold back the money Honiton town council owe the Beehive.

I ask you, what else in the town could replace the Beehive. The idea of a market town is to support the surrounding villages not the villages to support the town. Before the Beehive, local groups had to use venues for example Payhembury village hall why!

We have to think about the younger generation. Think of it as a legacy from the township of today. Keep the Beehive open.

Ruth Palmer

We have to think about the younger generation. Think of it as a legacy from the township of today. Keep the Beehive open.

Ruth Hepburn

'Honiton Community Theatre Company (HCTC) are committed to provide high quality theatre experience for the community. It is a fully inclusive group and strives to develop the confidence and skills of all its members. The success of HCTC has led to the recent investment in and development of a dedicated youth section.

In the event of the collapse of HCC, can Honiton Town Council guarantee that HCTC will be able to continue rehearsing and performing at The Beehive and will the Town Council guarantee to reimburse any expenses incurred?

Linda Martin

'How does the council feel that it can help support the Beehive to continue to prosper'?

'What is the specific reason the council have given on reneging on the 10% of specified operation costs from year 3 onward?'

John Gregory

I wish to be one of the people of the town allowed to speak at the above council meeting, noting that - unless modified by the meeting - standing orders allow just 5 townsfolk to speak at such a meeting. Given the anxieties on all sides, it would be helpful if the council, on this occasion only, allowed up to 20 townsfolk to speak (one hour is a small sacrifice to gauge townsfolk opinion on such an important issue).

I believe I have sufficient understanding of the matter under review, having performed with 3 different theatre companies in the Beehive as actor, director, and script writer. In addition, I have used the Beehive in many other capacities: talks, music, dance, exhibitions, meetings, cinema, celebrations etc.

The viewpoint I wish to express is the major gain there has been for the townsfolk from all that the Beehive offers: skills development, civic happiness, healthy lifestyles and more. We cannot allow all this to be lost by stupid arguments on pounds and pence - with the result that both sides increase outgoings and reduce income. Step up negotiators on both sides. Think long term, not selfish squabbles!

Mr Gregory went on to say that the dispute could lead to the demise of the Beehive. Are the Council prepared to throw it all away regarding the cost of a small number of paid staff who are supported by a large number of volunteers? This should not be a battle about egos, and all should respect the public and work together and forget past arguments. Both parties should talk and listen – maybe using different Councillors rather than wasting money on legal fees.

Mrs Mary Ann Olive spoke and queried whether the two parties had had their crunch talks and if so, what was the outcome?

Mr David Perkins spoke on behalf of the Beehive and thanked the public for their support. The Beehive stemmed from Councillors with a vision and they should be congratulated. The Beehive has enhanced the local community with its activities, it

has enhanced the lives of all generations who are entertained, grow and aspire through its services and assist with mental health, alleviates loneliness and is an opportunity to give something back. But to carry on the Charity needs the Town Council to be its partner and find a strategy which allows it to continue with its charitable objectives. Any misgivings about the Charity should be put to one side – everyone must move on. The community enterprise achieved is more important and he bears no ill will. Differences need to be put aside and both parties need to work together to ensure the future sustainability of the Beehive and to that end Mr Perkins confirmed that he would step aside as a Trustee by the end of the year or when the dispute is resolved, whichever comes sooner.

Mrs Serena Sexton spoke. She started as a volunteer at the Beehive 18 months ago and then joined the Board. She has been bowled over by the support from the public regarding the dispute, which is best resolved by drawing a line and the 2 parties coming to a consensus and working in partnership. The proposed meeting the week before did not take place – can it happen later on this week in the spirit of conciliation and to avoid wasting more taxpayer's money? The parties need to work out a sustainable amount which the Council can give to the Charity.

Cllr Zarczynski responded saying that the Town Council had tried to arrange a meeting and it was not their decision to cancel it. Serena Sexton suggested that there should be no red lines regarding the meeting.

In response the Town Clerk suggested a meeting on Thursday 17th October with no limitations on who could attend from HCC. He would attend with Cllr Sheridan-Shaw.

The Town Clerk confirmed that there were issues regarding finance which would be discussed at the meeting on Thursday. The two main issues were the amounts claimed under the headings "management fees" and "security and reception costs". The Council did make a payment to HCC last year in relation to the service charges claimed and requested sight of corroborating invoices. The Council still has queries regarding the 2016/17 accounts and was advised by the internal auditor that invoices had to be inspected. The Council did not want to go to Arbitration in relation to the dispute and the Council's solicitors advised that Arbitration was not necessary, but HCC insisted.

Each Councillor was then invited to put forward their view as follows:

Cllr Hanratty: The Beehive is an asset to Honiton and past issues can be resolved with good will and co-operation on both sides.

Cllr Gilson: The Beehive is a wonderful place and she fully supports the public in their support for it.

Cllr Howard: Was pleased the meeting had taken place and that the proposals for going forward will be looked at together – the meeting was positive.

Cllr McNally: Everyone hopes the Beehive will carry on and it has a lot of support from the community. The issue is financial. The Council has a duty to ensure taxpayers money is spent properly. Not everyone in Honiton visits the Beehive and there are other projects which need funding such as the proposed allotments.

Cllr Taylor raised concerns regarding “de minimus” amounts allowed by the EU as state aid and went to introduce an issue regarding TRIP in Honiton and Ealing Borough Council in London but was advised by the Chair not to continue as the argument did not apply.

Cllr Darrant: Supports the Beehive but the current dispute is not the fault of the Council. He hoped that a resolution would be found at the meeting on Thursday.

Cllr Sheridan-Shaw: is the Council representative on HCC board and has received number letters, emails and telephone calls. He hoped for a true and complete resolution of the dispute.

Cllr Pollington: The Beehive is a huge asset and the public are passionate. She hoped the issue can be resolved.

Cllr Carrigan: Supports the Beehive however advised that the Beehive benefits from 25% of the Town Council’s precept.

Cllr Wyatt: The Beehive is great – the parties need to move forward and hoped that a solution would be found at the meeting on Thursday. The current lease is open to interpretation and if a document is not fit for purpose it needs to be rewritten and made more specific. HCC’s finances should be more open to the public and the Council needs to do what it can to keep the Beehive open with long term issues dealt with over the coming months.

Cllr Kolek: has every confidence that the meeting on Thursday evening will lead to a resolution as further legal fees must be avoided.

Cllr J Hannay: Agreed with the above – the Beehive is a great cause and should not be a you or us problem but a joint problem to solve.

Cllr Macve: Queried how this position was reached -the parties need to change course otherwise only the lawyers will gain. The Council is accountable to taxpayers and there should be no more legal fees. It is however not just a question of money.

Cllr Coombs: The Beehive is a valuable asset and must not close. Money is being wasted on legal fees and the dispute is a huge distraction when time could be spent on other matters.

Cllr Hattle-Spence: There is a genuine desire for the Beehive to succeed. Does it achieve the results it should? There needs to be openness and transparency on both sides and no further litigation. He hoped the meeting on Thursday would be successful and that the Beehive will be even better in the future with fresh ideas.

Cllr Zarczynski: The perception is, that he is against the Beehive and keeping back money from HCC. This is wrong – he supported the building of the Beehive and was the Cllr appointed to oversee the build. Honiton needs such a facility and the volunteers and staff do fantastic work. But the Council are custodians of public money and some Honitonians do not support the Beehive – it is their money also. The invoices have to be validated but they are only seen at the end of the financial year and by then the 10% payment could be over or under what is owed. The Town Council tried to avoid incurring legal costs, but this was forced on it and has been a waste of money. The Council had no alternative. He agreed with everything in the Clerk's report and hoped that after Thursday the parties can move on. However, the Council is not an open chequebook and needs to look after the interests of all taxpayers.

Vivian Ash then spoke. Honiton Town Council owns the freehold of the Beehive and is paying a mortgage on an asset.

Cllr Zarczynski confirmed that he was pleased the matter had tonight been in Part A – previously it had not been appropriate to do so during negotiations but as these had broken down and in light of the social media campaign it was time to bring the discussion into Part A.

The Town Clerk confirmed that he would report back to Council after the meeting on Thursday.

19/961 To close the meeting

The meeting was closed at 8.45pm.