

## HONITON TOWN COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Full Council Meeting of the Town Council held via Zoom on 11th January 2021 at 7.00 pm.

#### Present

##### St Michael's Ward

Cllr J Taylor  
Cllr J Zarczynski (Chairman)  
Cllr J McNally  
Cllr L Dolby

##### St Paul's Ward

Cllr R Coombs  
Cllr C Gilson  
Cllr P Carrigan

#### In attendance

Heloise Marlow, Deputy Town Clerk  
Cllr P Twiss EDDC/DCC  
22 Members of the public

### PART A

**20/125** The Chairman welcomed Councillors and members of the public who were attending via ZOOM and confirmed that the meeting would be recorded.

**20/126 To receive apologies for absence.**  
None were received.

**20/127 To receive declarations of interest and receipt of requests for new DPI dispensations on items on the agenda.**  
None were received.

**20/128 To note the grant of dispensations made by the Town Clerk in relation to the business of this meeting.**  
None were made.

**20/129 Public question time on items on the agenda**

Mr Burgess asked the following question:

1. **In the published accounts for 2019-20 under the Staffing heading there is a cost of £3930 for legal fees. What does this relate to?**
2. The council has just had the resignation of Tony McCollum the Market Manager/Town Development Manager and the news article referred to a possible constructive dismissal claim, with the previous Town Clerk making allegations against the Council and the absence of the Town Clerk before him costing the Council an extra £40,000.00 in salary fees together with a further settlement of approx. £10,000.

Signed Chair

8<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Is there any current claim against the council relating to unfair or constructive dismissal?  
Is it true that another member of staff is under an HR investigation that may result in dismissal? If staff feel that they have been unfairly dismissed they will pursue the Council via legal means for this and so how much money has the council budgeted to meet employment claims against it?

3. How many Code of Conduct claims against members of the council are currently being investigated by EDDC Monitoring Officer?
4. Why is HTC not publishing its reserve accounts and showing how the money is being spent from these accounts?
5. Is money from reserve accounts being used to settle legal fees?

Cllr Zarczynski advised that he had discussed these questions with the Deputy Town Clerk and the incoming Town Clerk as not all of the information required to respond is readily available. They have advised him that he should respond to Mr Burgess in writing and confirmed that his response would be published.

### **20/130 To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020.**

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the Minutes.

Proposed by Cllr Gilson and seconded by Cllr Carrigan.

### **20/131 Reports from District and County Councillors.**

Cllr Twiss provided the following report:

*Happy New Year where I hope this will be a marked improvement of the last one. We are clearly in the eye of the storm right now but I feel very optimistic about 2021 as a whole year.*

*The first week or so into January usually has little to report but 2021 is different with this report inevitably focusing on the Covid crisis, where I look forward to a return to more usual matters sooner than later.*

#### **Covid-19**

*Infection rates in the UK have been growing rapidly, as have hospitalisations and sadly deaths. Over the last week alone (or most recent week for which data is available), positive tests have increased by 30%, hospital admissions by 35% and deaths by 45%. A number of hospitals, particularly, but not exclusively in London and the South-East, are reporting Covid-19 patients accounting for more than 50% of occupancy, Intensive Care Unit occupancy in some effectively over 100%, deaths rising and staff on their knees. To describe the scenes, we are seeing as distressing is for me is a gross understatement.*

*The statistics for Devon are much better (less than half England's average for infections and a quarter of those in London) and, positively, while the more infectious 'new variant' virus is present the last statistics for Exeter report that it remained at a*

*relatively low 5% or so of infections. The infection rate has been growing rapidly, however, and current statistics do not fully reflect the Christmas holiday break.*

*The numbers of patients admitted in to the R,D & E for Covid-19 patients to date are good, relative to areas of high infection. In the run up to Christmas the numbers across Wonford, our community hospitals and the Nightingale hospital reduced to around 100 patients and has remained at this level, but we should not take false assurance from this, given that prevalence of disease in our communities is most likely to result in increased admissions going forward.*

*Currently there are around 5% of local NHS most valuable resource i.e. the staff who are either unwell, self-isolating or shielding as a consequence of Covid-19, in addition to our normal sickness rates; 'up-country' this is worse still. This clearly puts added pressure on other colleagues who are able to attend.*

*The 'get out of Jail' card from the pandemic is a vaccination. The National position is 3 vaccines approved, 2 currently available, including the easy to store/transport AZ/Oxford vaccine), but clearly we are dependent on the delivery of these vaccines in volume. In Devon and across organisations (hospitals, GP practices, care providers, Universities, Local Government, businesses etc) within the county a huge effort has been made to ensure we have the staff and infrastructure needed to administer the vaccines we receive safely and expeditiously.*

### **COVID19 fund**

*The DCC Covid fund re-opened on Monday the 11<sup>th</sup> of January to provide flexible resources to organisations working with communities who are clinically extremely vulnerable or disproportionately impacted by coronavirus and the social and economic consequences of this current national lockdown.*

*Applications can be submitted from 11 January 2021 until 5 March 2021 (please note that the end date could be amended due to the available funding being used up or lockdown restrictions being further extended). Please visit <https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/document/covid-19-fund/> for further details and how to start the application process.*

*Applications will need to include details of how much funding will be required and how you have assessed the need for that amount.*

*Grants will typically be between £300 and £700, although where there is evidence that a project is exceptional, we may enter into discussions with applicants and offer higher awards.*

### **Traffic flows**

*It is encouraging that people seem to be adhering to the Tier and lockdown restrictions but arguably not as much as they might be with some interesting statistics on movements below, with a very clear message about the importance of your journey and is it really necessary still very important.*

The first few days of Lockdown 3 are around -30% when compared with the equivalent days in the previous year.

Morning Peak Hour flows (7am to 9am) during these days are similar, at around -28%.

As a reminder:-

24hr weekday flows during Lockdown1 (23<sup>rd</sup> Mar to 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020) were around -70%

24hr weekday flows during Lockdown2 (5<sup>th</sup> Nov to 1st Dec 2020) were around -25%

24hr weekday flows after Lockdown2 (early Dec 2020) were around -11%

Therefore the initial Lockdown3 days have reduced flows from -11% before Christmas to -30% now but still more can be done where people who can work from Home should be working from Home.

#### **Key dates over festive period and initial Lockdown3 days**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>24hr flow compared with previous year</b>
Christmas Eve	Tier3 restrictions	+1%
Christmas Day	Limited socialising restrictions	-11%
New Year's Eve	Tier3 restrictions	-11%
New Year's Day	Tier3 restrictions	-32%
Mon 4 <sup>th</sup> Jan	"Normal" Tier 3 working day	-20%
Tue 5 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Day 1 of Lockdown3	-28%
Wed 6 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Day 2 of Lockdown3	-33%
Thu 7 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Day 3 of Lockdown3	-32%

#### **Lockdown Parking arrangements**

DCC Parking Officers have assessed the situation and propose that enforcement will continue although we will continue to consider if relaxation of any restrictions is required. The priority will be arterial routes and ensuring safe movement of traffic to ensure access to amenities and emergency vehicles as well as enabling access to health care and vaccination sites. Highways teams are working closely with public health colleagues to support the roll out of vaccinations and the team are being updated as centres are identified.

*Whilst it anticipated that central commercial areas may be less busy, it is understood that many non-essential shops are now in a position to offer “click and collect” services and the requirement to manage parking remains.*

*In terms of volunteer support for people requiring help with brief visits in areas with restricted parking , a simple collection drop off of provisions at the doorstep with social distancing applied. Therefore these would be accommodated in normal provisions for loading and unloading. Displaying something in their windows to identify their activity would be helpful.*

*As we experienced in earlier lockdowns there may be increased parking in residential permit areas where residents are now working from home, if they do not have access to residents parking permits the team will again offer temporary virtual residents permits to assist. For health care professionals, it is felt that current Health & Care Worker Permits or the national NHS Worker Exemption Permit will provide sufficient support.*

*The enforcement team are mindful that there may be new ‘challenges’ from members of public on-street who may feel that enforcement should be suspended. Staff are instructed to carry out dynamic risk assessments for each site visited and empowered to leave a location if there is a threat or if social distancing cannot be maintained. They also have body worn video and lone worker alert devices for their safety.*

### **20/132 Reports from Members with Special Responsibilities**

Cllr Zarczynski confirmed that he had discussed cleaning the outside space and car park around the Beehive, the repainting of the parapet walls and the clearing of the drains with the Deputy Clerk earlier in the day. A quote had been obtained for the work which would be carried out as soon as possible.

Cllr Zarczynski also advised that he was looking at improving the access to the Beehive by removing a section of the railing and providing further steps to the car park area.

Cllr Zarczynski also advised that he was in discussions with the incoming Town Clerk the provision of electric charging points in the Beehive car park.

### **20/133 Green and Open Spaces Committee**

The Deputy Clerk apologised for not including an item on the agenda to approve the Green and Open Spaces Committee minutes from 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019 as had been agreed at the meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020 and confirmed that she would therefore bring those minutes to Members for approval at the February Town Council meeting.

Members **RESOLVED** by 6 votes for with 1 abstention to approve the minutes of the Green and Open Spaces Committee meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020.

Proposed by Cllr Zarczynski and seconded by Cllr McNally.

Members **RESOLVED** by 6 votes for with 1 abstention to adopt the 8 recommendations as set out in the minutes of the Green and Open Spaces Committee on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020.

Proposed by Cllr Zarczynski and seconded by Cllr Gilson.

### **20/134 Vacation of office by failure to attend meetings**

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to accept Cllr Howard's apologies with regards to attending meetings for a further 6 months due to ill health.

Proposed by Cllr Taylor and Cllr McNally.

### **20/135 Planning Application 20/2461/FUL – The Dairy Barn, Combehayes Farm, Honiton, EX14 9JS**

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to bring this item forward on the Agenda.

Proposed by Cllr McNally and seconded by Cllr Coombs.

The applicant spoke in favour of his application and Members then discussed it.

Cllr Zarczynski proposed to support the application. However as there was no seconder the proposal failed.

Members thanked the applicant for the additional information provided and **RESOLVED** by 2 votes in favour, 1 against, and 4 abstentions to make the following comment to the Planning Authority.

Members **OBJECT** to the application for the following reasons:

- The proposal would adversely affect the East Devon Area of Outstanding Beauty.
- The proposal was not for a farming related activity.
- The proposed barn would be overbearing and unsuitable for the site.
- The proposal would further erode the historical integrity of the listed farmhouse and the original complex of farm buildings.
- The proposal was for outbuildings required for previously converted outbuildings which adversely impacts the rural setting of the site.
- The proposal would exacerbate drainage issues on site.

Proposed by Cllr Coombs and seconded by Cllr Carrigan.

**20/136 HTC Grants Procedure 2020/21**

Cllr Zarczynski introduced the agenda item noting that a high amount of applications had been received, mainly due to the effects of the Corona virus. The amount requested in grants is in excess of the grant budget, but the Council has reviewed its finances and the Council is holding in reserves more than it needs to. He proposed approving all the grants that complied with the grant policy and if these exceeded the grant budget of £18,000 then the shortfall would be made up from reserves.

Cllr McNally queried whether the Council could also help those groups whose applications did not comply with the grant policy?

The Deputy Clerk presented her report.

Members discussed the following:

- The Youth Budget could be used to pay some of the grants.
- The grant policy was too unwieldy and needed to be reviewed.
- Could the Council assist groups whose applications did not comply with the current grant policy?
- If the Council did so, would this be unfair to other groups who had not applied knowing that they did not comply with the grant policy?
- Should the Council open up the grant applications process again to allow such groups to put forward an application?
- Honiton Gymnastics had submitted a grant application without specifying the amount requested. This grant could be paid out of the youth budget.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the grant applications which the Deputy Clerk had advised complied with the grant policy in a block vote.

Proposed by Cllr Carrigan and seconded by Cllr McNally.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve a grant in the sum of £15,000.00 to Honiton Gymnastics Club.

Proposed by Cllr Carrigan and seconded by Cllr Taylor.

Members discussed that where an applicant did not have a bank account but was requesting funds to pay a specific bill, then the Council's policy could be amended to enable that bill to be paid directly, if of course the applicant met the other criteria.

In particular Members discussed the grant application received from Honiton Community Advice Service. Members spoke in favour of granting the grant requested with Cllr Gilson providing further details of the organisation which she was supporting and during which she stated that the Citizens Advice Bureau had closed permanently.

Cllr Coombs expressed his concerns regarding this information as Members had only just approved a £4000 grant to Citizens Advice East Devon. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that she had no information regarding the closure of the Citizens Advice in Honiton and so would make enquiries as to its status prior to paying the grant approved.

Members **RESOLVED** by 6 votes in favour with 1 abstention that the four applications which the Deputy Clerk had identified as not complying with the current grant policy would be reviewed further and brought back to the Full Council meeting in February 2021 for consideration and that the grant application process would be re-opened to allow other organisations who also may not comply with the grant policy to apply without any guarantee that any of the applications would be granted.

Proposed by Cllr Coombs and seconded by Cllr Carrigan.

### **20/137 Budget Planning Report**

The Deputy Clerk advised that there were two parts to the item – the budget and the precept. The proposed budget for next year was set out in the excel spreadsheet prepared by Cllr Carrigan and explained in the attached report and Members would need to approve a budget at the meeting.

Members also needed to approve the precept for next year. The precept figure for 2020/21 was £299,660.00 based on a tax base figure of 3,903 properties. The tax base figure for 2021/22 has reduced to 3,865 properties which is a reduction of 38 Band D properties. To prevent an increase for householders the precept figure needed to be reduced to £296,742.00, which is £4,257.00 less than the precept budgeted for in the budget proposed by Cllr Carrigan.

Cllr Zarczynski proposed agreeing the above precept figure on the basis that Council had enough reserves to cover the projects envisaged and to assist the residents of Honiton in the current financial climate.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to set the precept for 2021-2022 at £296,742.00.

Proposed by Cllr Zarczynski and seconded by Cllr McNally.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to adopt the 2021/22 Budget as attached.

Proposed by Cllr Carrigan and seconded by Cllr Zarczynski.



### **20/138 Honiton Community Complex AGM 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

Cllr Zarczynski confirmed that he had requested this agenda item as he had been disappointed to note in the AGM report that HTC were referred to as a debtor. He wanted to make it clear that HTC did not owe HCC any monies. HTC had now received a response to their offer relating to the future relationship between HTC and HCC which would be discussed at the next Council meeting and that letter contradicted the information in the AGM report. Whilst HTC and HCC were in negotiations regarding the disputed invoices, HTC continued to make payments to HCC and a settlement was subsequently agreed.

**20/139** Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to take item 11 into Part B

Proposed by Cllr Zarczynski and seconded by Cllr Carrigan.

### **20/140 HR and current staffing matters**

Members discussed various matters.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to extend the meeting by 15 minutes.

Proposed by Cllr Zarczynski and seconded by Cllr Taylor.

Following the Resolution of 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 (20/109) Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to delegate authority to the Town Clerk (in consultation with the Chairman and Chairman of HR Committee) to enter an agreement with DAS Legal Expenses Insurance Company Ltd (DAS Law) (being the company provided by the Council's Insurer) to act on behalf of the Council in an employment dispute.

Proposed by Cllr Zarczynski and seconded by Cllr Gilson.

Note: Members agreed that HR Services would be consulted in addition.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve in principle the proposed press release subject to the incoming Town Clerk reviewing the document referred to above and confirming to Members that the proposed press release was approved or required amendment.

Proposed by Cllr Zarczynski and seconded by Cllr McNally.

**20/141** To close the meeting.

The meeting was closed at 21.15pm.