

Honiton



TALK OF THE TOWN

THE NEWSLETTER OF HONITON TOWN COUNCIL

February 2015

ELECTION SPECIAL



YOUR TOWN NEEDS YOU!

Help make Honiton a great place and become a Councillor on Honiton Town Council

In May 2015 there will be an opportunity for residents of Honiton to elect their Town Councillors - 18 in total representing St. Paul's Ward and St Michael's Ward for the next four years. Whether you are retired, not working, self-employed or working - part or full time, why not consider putting yourself forward as a Town Councillor?

What are we looking for?

We are looking for all kinds of people who are willing to use their skills and knowledge in serving the people of Honiton. Whether you are a practical type of person who likes to roll up sleeves and get stuck in, or enjoy decision making and planning ahead, or getting involved with local organisations or a combination of these or whatever you would like to achieve within the time you have available - YOUR TOWN NEEDS YOU!

How do I become a Councillor?

In the first instance you need complete a Nomination Form (see proposed election timetable below). Nomination Forms or further information can be obtained from Honiton Town Council offices - tel no: 01404 42957, email address: towncouncil@honiton.gov.uk

PROPOSED ELECTION TIMETABLE

Publication of Notice of Election	Not later than Monday 30 March 2015
Start of Nomination Process	The day following publication of Notice of Election
Deadline for Receipt of Nominations	4.00 pm Thursday 9 April 2015
Publication of Statements of Persons Nominated	4.00 pm Friday 10 April 2015
Day of Poll (to be confirmed by 30 March 2015)	7.00 am to 10 pm Thursday 7 May 2015

How can I be a Town Councillor if I work?

Gary Elliot who works full time in Honiton says being a Town Councillor is hard work especially when difficult decisions have to be made but believes it gives Councillors an opportunity to enrich their lives by contributing positively and making a difference in the town in which they live. He was asked on how he fits in being a Councillor with his full time employment.



Councillor Gary Elliot

So how much time does it take up being a Town Councillor?

There are monthly Council meetings, which are generally held on the first Monday in the month. In addition there are monthly Policy or Finance Committee meetings and fortnightly planning meetings, which Councillors are strongly encouraged to be part of but you don't have to attend them all, everybody misses one or two due to clashes with other commitments or holidays.

On top of that there are working groups set up to address specific topics; these can be of short duration to draft the Council's response to a consultation or of longer duration such as the Beehive Steering Group, which project managed the design phase of the Beehive building. More recently a working group has been set up to engage and consult with Honiton town residents over the Neighbourhood Plan.

But don't those meetings take place in the day time?

Actually all town Council meetings are held in the evening, usually starting at 7.00pm and must be finished by 10.00pm so there's nearly always time to get home and have a bite to eat before heading off to a meeting. Agendas and associated paperwork are sent out a few days in advance so you've always got time to prepare yourself for a meeting.

A working group can decide for itself when it meets. So it is quite feasible to work full time and be an active member of the Council even if you work shifts.

What does Honiton Town Council do?

- Represents and promotes Honiton.
- Provides a forum for residents to raise issues.
- Provides help to residents with queries.
- Works with businesses and local organizations.
- Manages the Street Market.
- Represents Honiton at Remembrance Day Ceremonies and Armed Forces Day.
- Advises on Planning Applications.
- Approves advertising signs for shops.
- Maintains and improves public footpaths.
- Leads on the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Manages Roundball Wood.
- Organises Charter Day and Hot Pennies Ceremony.
- Liaises with the local Police.
- Recommends action to be taken on protected trees.
- Represents Honiton at Twinning events.
- Leads on allotment provision.
- And much more!

Responsibilities of East Devon District Council include

Local planning, council housing, refuse collection, sports and leisure facilities, street cleaning and maintaining the electoral register

Responsibilities of Devon County Council include

Schools, social care for the elderly and vulnerable, road maintenance, libraries, trading standards, economic development and regeneration, emergency planning, tourism promotion and coastal protection.

The legal stuff

To stand as a councillor you must satisfy these requirements:

- Over 18 years of age
 - A British citizen, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union
 - On the Electoral Register for the council area for which you wish to stand,
- In addition a person will be qualified if the following conditions are met: a person who during the whole of the twelve months before nomination as a candidate occupied land or other premises as owner or tenant in the parish; or has, during the same period, resided in that area or within three miles thereof; or has during the same period, had a principal or only place of work in that area

You cannot stand for election if you:

- Are bankrupt and an Order or Interim Restriction Order has been imposed.
- Have, within five years before the day of the election, been convicted in the United Kingdom of any offence and have had a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of over three months without the option of a fine
- Work for the council where you are intending to standing for election (but you can work for other local authorities, including the principal authorities that represent the same area).
- Have been convicted or reported guilty of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court.

It takes all sorts to be a Councillor!

Vivienne Ash was, until 2011, an East Devon District Councillor for 20 years as well as being a Honiton Town Councillor for many years. She was asked:

Why did you decide to become involved in Local Government?

I dislike injustice and had the feeling that people's problems were not being dealt with fairly.

What has been the most satisfying moments during your time as a Councillor?

There were are three issues that stand out for me:

- 1) At the individual level - seeing someone get a better home when they have been living in poor conditions for a long time.
- 2) At the community level - proposing that a grant be given towards setting up a town bus service. Thankfully it is still running and
- 3) Seeing the Beehive opened and being so successful after many years of campaigning for it.

Sadly many people do not vote or take an active part in local affairs. They do not seem to realise that decisions are being taken on their behalf which can directly affect their lives. It is so important that people with a social conscience and commitment come forward to ensure the future well being of Honiton and it's residents.

What three key attributes would you say are the most important for a Councillor to possess?

A dogged determination, endless patience and above all a sense of humour!



Councillor Vivienne Ash



Excuses for not joining your local council

- “I’m too young.”
If you are eighteen you are old enough.
- “What’s the point of just joining a talking shop, they don’t do anything.”
Have you ever been to a meeting? Why not speak to a Councillor to find out what they have do?
- “I’m too busy, and couldn’t commit to attending every single meeting.”
Meetings are rarely more frequent than one evening a month, and missing the occasional one is acceptable. Most meetings only take a couple of hours.
- “I’m concentrating on finding a job or furthering my career.”
Being a local councillor is a definite plus point to add to a CV – it shows you can make decisions, work in a team, are community minded and proactive. Prospective employers will be impressed.
- “I haven’t lived here very long and don’t know the area well.”
If you are a Commonwealth/EU citizen and have lived or worked in the town for a year or already have your name on the electoral roll, you are eligible..... Your views as an ‘incomer’ should be welcomed, as you will probably see things more objectively.
- “I’m worried that I won’t get many votes, and look silly.”
Even if you are not voted on this time, you may well be approached if a vacancy occurs in the future and have the opportunity to be co-opted to the council.
- “Our local council is full of old fogeys.”
Join up and change it then.
- “I’d look a fool because I won’t know what’s going on.”
You will be eased in gently; there is help, advice and training available. The clerk is the officer of the council, and he or she will be able to explain the rules.
- “I’ll have to sign that code of conduct thing that the press keep on about.”
The code of conduct is nowhere near as onerous as made out in the press - and is there to protect you.
- “I’ll have to let everyone know all about my business and personal affairs.”
The declaration of interest form completed at the outset asks you to list business interests within the town area, to guard against bias when town issues are debated. As for personal affairs, get real, everyone probably knows about those already!
- “I’m too lazy, and not interested in my community.”
An excellent reason for not joining - so please don’t!

TOWN CLERK: Mrs. Chetna Jones

DEPUTY CLERK: Mrs. Sarah Jenkins

Town Council Offices, The Beehive, Dowell Street, Honiton, EX14 1LZ

Tel/Fax: 01404 42957 towncouncil@honiton.gov.uk

www.honiton.gov.uk