

HONITON

TALK OF THE TOWN

"The Town in the Country"

THE NEWSLETTER OF HONITON TOWN COUNCIL

DECEMBER 2009



MAYOR'S GREETINGS



Dear Readers,

It amazes me that I have already served half my term of office as Mayor. It seems to have gone so quickly, largely because the Town Council has done so much.

I am really proud of the way the Council is driving forward a lot of important issues such as the improved marketing of the town, enhancing the street market, working with young people - just a few of the many areas being tackled.

We are building up positive partnerships with other organisations in the town, as well as with the surrounding parishes. The liaison with the parishes has improved understanding of how important services in Honiton are to our neighbours.

I assure you that the Town Council, and our excellent team of officers, will continue to work to the best of their ability for the benefit of Honiton and its surrounds.

May I wish you all a very peaceful Christmas.

Vivienne Ash

Wishing you and your family a wonderful Christmas and all good wishes for the year ahead.



Network Rail

After many years of lobbying by the Town Council and other local authorities, the rail service from London to Exeter is at last being improved to an hourly service. This is excellent news for Honiton as it gives people far more opportunity to use public transport to visit our town, as well as giving our own residents the opportunity to access other destinations more easily.

The Town Council, whilst welcoming the upgraded service, is continuing to lobby for even more improvements and would like to see a half hourly service introduced in the near future.

REMINDER ...

- **FREE PARKING AT LACE WALK SHORT STAY CAR PARK TODAY, WEDNESDAY 23 DECEMBER 2pm – 6pm**
- **ADDITIONAL MARKET ON CHRISTMAS EVE, THURSDAY 24 DECEMBER**

RECENT CAMPAIGNS BY THE TOWN COUNCIL

The Bungalow

Following recent concerns by Councillors, local medical practitioners and members of the public, a special meeting of the Town Council was called late in November to allow the people of Honiton to put questions to the Chief Executive of the Devon Partnership Trust, Mr Iain

Tulley, regarding the suspension of services at The Bungalow, an acute unit in Honiton for people with dementia.

Mr Tulley outlined the current situation with The Bungalow. He apologised for the lack of communication that had arisen regarding the extension of the

suspension of services and advised that, during the suspension, two matters had affected planning; these were: the publication of the National Dementia Strategy and the review by the Trust of older people's services generally. He went on to explain that the services currently in place had been

THE BUNGALOW... CONTINUED...

established 20 years ago following the closure of large services and in that time the population had grown and got older, resulting in greater incidence of dementia. However the level of resource and design had not changed. The Trust was now looking to respond in the best way possible and, while beds continued to play a part, this was felt to only be a small part.

Mr Tulley and his colleagues answered a range of questions from members of the public who attended the meeting and set out the Trust's plans as follows:

- To redevelop and refurbish hospitals in Torbay, Exeter and Barnstaple to make them fit for care.
- To look to develop

services for people with functional illness

- To develop memory clinics in East Devon
- To provide additional in-patient beds in 5 units across Devon
- To re-open The Bungalow to a wider catchment; however the precise long term use of The Bungalow was still uncertain
- To consider the best location to ultimately put beds

He pointed out that £1.8billion was currently spent on the NHS in Devon; less than 8% of this was spent on mental health care. With the changes proposed the Trust was aiming to reduce the ratio of expert support to patients from 1-2500 to 1-1400. The Trust was looking for a balance of quality, cost

and amount of access to service.

Councillors pointed out that this was an issue that concerned everyone in East Devon working together and urged everyone to lobby as appropriate. The Town Council itself will be keeping a close eye on the situation and will continue to question the Trust on its plans.



Mental health is a BIG problem that needs to be addressed— NOW!

TOWN COUNCIL MEETS WITH POST OFFICE TO RESOLVE LOCAL ISSUES

Following complaints about the growing length of queues being experienced at Honiton Post Office, the Town Council called together a meeting on 7th November to discuss the issues with representatives from the Post Office, together with partners from Devon County Council, East Devon District Council and Consumer Focus.

The Town Council had monitored the situation over a week and found that waiting times could be as much as 45 minutes with people

having to wait outside on the street on many occasions. The Post Office explained that plans had been in place to ensure adequate staffing over the Christmas period but several staff sickness problems, which had been ongoing since the summer, had resulted in shortages and in queues which they admitted were unacceptably long. Efforts had been made to find casual staff to address the shortages but suitably qualified people had not been available.

The Post Office outlined a number of initiatives being looked at to ease the situation at Honiton and these included.

- New facilities being rolled out in other branches which it was hoped would be introduced to Honiton in the near future.
- Contacting all ebay customers and asking them to avoid busy periods.
- The introduction of the travel desk and fast drop facility to ease waiting time for all customers.

- Setting up desks at specific times for individual tasks, eg car tax
 - Reviewing the queuing route inside the Post Office
- The introduction of an ATM outside

Following discussion the Post Office agreed to:

- Look at staff cover.
- Review late opening on market day.
- Review the layout of the Post Office.
- Improve communications with the general public.

TOWN COUNCIL MEETS WITH POST OFFICE
continued ...

- Clearly identify where equipment such as scales are available for public use

It is hoped that we will soon see excessive queueing being a memory and the excellent staff of Honiton Post Office being able to serve the people of Honiton in the way they would wish.



CHRISTMAS TREE RECYCLING DATES & LOCATIONS

Thursday 7th Jan. Honiton, Dowell St car park – 08.30–12.00

Thursday 7th Jan. Axminster West St car park – 13.00–15.00

Friday 8th Jan. Seaton, Harbour Rd car park – 08.30–12.00

Friday 8th Jan Ottery St Mary, Land of Canaan car park – 13.00-15.00

Saturday 9th Jan. Exmouth, Imperial Road car park - 09.00-12.00

Saturday 9th Jan. Sidmouth, Manor Road car park – 13.00-15.30

THE BEEHIVE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Latest News

Plans are moving ahead very rapidly now to provide a community facility for Honiton – to be built adjacent to the Thelma Hulbert Gallery in Lace Walk.

The plans are for a subdividable 300-plus seating hall (suitable for a theatre, cinema, conferences, training, celebrations and community use) together with a café-bar. An upstairs facility will house a smaller room (which will also be used as a Council chamber) together with an ICT suite (for use by local business and residents) and the Town Council offices (which will be able to extend its opening hours

to the public).

We are very pleased to announce that the Town Council has been discussing with the Registrar the facilities that would be needed to relocate the Registration Service in the centre of town and it has been agreed that the Registrar will also be housed on the first floor and that the meeting room/Council chamber will be used to host wedding ceremonies, allowing the re-introduction of civil services in the town after their absence since the Registrar moved from Elmfield House.

A final decision by the Town Council to go ahead will be taken early in the new year and

the plans (together with the business plan) will be on public display in the second half of February so that comments may be taken on board before planning permission is sought.

After more than twenty years it would appear that the town's



own community facility – The Beehive – is within sight.

*Honiton Town Council wish all residents, family and friends a
Wonderful Christmas and good health and cheer for 2010.*

