

HONITON

TALK OF THE TOWN

THE NEWSLETTER OF HONITON TOWN COUNCIL

MARCH 2010

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

A public meeting will be held on **Thursday 11th March** at 7pm at the Council Offices when Mr Karime Hussain from East Devon District Council will be discussing the outline of the East Devon Local Development Framework and taking questions from the audience.

HONOURED CITIZEN FOR HONITON 2010.

Do you know someone who you think would qualify as an Honoured Citizen of Honiton? Send in your nomination together with details of why you consider your nominee should receive this prestigious role. All submissions will be put to the Town Council for consideration.

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

launch their "Home Alone" campaign. Do you have a family member, neighbour or friend that lives alone? If so, they would like to hear from you. Since April last year 5 people have died from fires in their homes and they all had one thing in common - they lived alone. It is important that everyone assists the Fire Service to identify those most at risk. If you have any concerns about someone or about yourself then contact the Fire Service on 0800 7311 822, quoting "Home Alone" before giving your details or by emailing firekills@dsfire.gov.uk

At Last! After years of talking about it, it's actually happening - At the Town Council meeting on 22nd February 2010 Town Council voted to go ahead with Community Complex.

Full plans and business plan have are available to view at the Town Council offices and at www.honiton.gov.uk. The public consultation runs from 24th February to 16th March. The Town Council offices are open every day from 10am to 1pm. We hope that you have taken the opportunity to view the plans at the extended evening openings as advised in the local press.

Annual Town Meeting

The Annual Town Meeting will be held on **Monday 15th March** at 7pm at the Town Council Offices. The Town Meeting may, by law, discuss all Town affairs and pass resolutions on them.

Agenda

1. Chairman's welcome
2. Introduction of councillors
3. Town Mayor's report
4. Minutes of previous Town Meeting
5. Policy Committee report
6. Town Management Committee report
7. Planning Committee report
8. Open forum

The Town Council offices will be open from 6pm when tea and coffee will be available and to give residents further opportunity to look at the plans for the community centre.

Roundball Wood

Guided walks are being organised by the Wardens on the following dates, meeting at Battishorne Way kissing gate ,

Sat. 8th May Bird walk 8.45 am for 9 am start:

Sat. 5th June Plants & Ferns walk led by Tony Cass, 9.15 for 9.30 am

You will need to telephone the Town Council office to book your place (limited to 10-12 places each day).

Reminder: NEW WASTE & RECYCLING SCHEME STARTS 24.3.10!

TOWN COUNCILLORS' CONTACT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON THE TOWN COUNCIL WEBSITE (www.honiton.gov.uk) OR TOWN NOTICEBOARDS. If you cannot access either of these facilities please telephone the office on 01404 42957 for further information.

HONITON TOWN COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Honiton Town Council's Planning Committee usually meets twice a month at the Town Council offices. The meetings are open to the public and there are opportunities allowing members of the public to speak on a planning application or planning matter by prior arrangement with the Town Clerk (notification is required by midday on the day of the meeting). This arrangement has worked well with regard to both a planning application for a site off Ottery Moor Lane and with regard to parking in and around Oaklea.

The committee, comprising of all town councillors, considers various applications including extensions, alterations to domestic and commercial properties, change of use of properties, signage for commercial premises and applications for works on trees. Our two Tree Wardens, Councillors Peter Fleming and Ron Farnham provide invaluable input to the committee with regard to tree work applications. We are not opposed to reasonable works being carried out on trees but are not prepared to sanction unnecessary works taking place to our natural amenity and resource. We are currently in dialogue with East Devon District Council to try and reach a more acceptable position on works by the council to trees, especially on housing developments.

We seek to take the town's heritage into account when we consider applications mindful that parts of the town are within a conservation area and we are a gateway to two areas of outstanding natural beauty. We have had a number of applications from national companies wishing to roll out their corporate colours and signage to their Honiton premises. We have found dialogue can open up agreement on subtle changes or modifications that can reduce the visual impact. To this end the Town Council has revised its Town Design Statement (Policies for Fascia Boards & Hanging Signs) and lodged a copy with East Devon District Council. Copies were sent out to traders and are also available from the office. The Statement gives the business community an idea of how their premises appearance can complement the existing appearance of the town.

We are also conscious that whilst the town's traders have done remarkably well in keeping trading during the recession, trading conditions have not been easy and traders should not expect planning decisions to allow an application that would be detrimental to the vulnerable eco-system of independent traders and specialist shops we value. Improvements to the current arrangements for parking in the town would undoubtedly help both traders and their customers but also residents whose day to day lives are being blighted by parking in their area.

Being of detriment to the local economy was one of our objections to the proposals from Tesco to open an *Extra* store on the outskirts of town on a site off Ottery Moor Lane. This site has subsequently seen expansion by *Goonvean* and a storage container facility opening but it is likely that we will again, at some point, be asked to consider an application by a major supermarket for a site in or around the town.

The applications by Lidl and Aldi have shown that a supermarket does not have to be detrimental to the town and that by working with the Town Council, agreement can be reached on issues such as traffic management. The potential loss of a petrol station on the Heathpark and the difficulties *Slades* have had in relocating show, however, that nothing is ever straightforward with planning.

Traffic management remains a challenge for the town where development has often not been matched by the provision of facilities. The Town Council held two productive meetings with the Highways Agency over Kings Road / Monkton Road and whilst we would have liked to have seen more in place there are improvements being implemented at present. The meetings have given the Council a better understanding of the legal barriers to highway improvements and *Highways* a better understanding of the issues facing residents in that part of town. We are hopeful of equally constructive dialogue over the Dowell Street area.

The District Council is having to make difficult decisions at present and there are changes to Planning in progress including charges for advice on larger applications, no longer sending out notice decisions but posting them online instead. These changes are not necessarily a bad thing but will be monitored and we will seek to input into the process. The Town Council is also exploring ways in which we can improve our service including making greater use of technology and have been successful in obtaining a grant from the National Lottery to enable us to achieve our aims.

We continue to press East Devon for an equitable solution to the ongoing planning dispute at the Cedars at Otter Valley Park. We proposed allowing the residents to remain in their properties on the understanding that subsequent use would be seasonal only. We have succeeded in gaining agreement that East Devon will take no further action until the residents have had their opportunity to make representations in court later in the year.

THE POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT

The Policy Committee of the Town Council meets four times per year to resolve financial and policy aspects of the Town Council and to make recommendations to the full council. The committee is open to all councillors and at present most councillors are members.

Honiton has Quality Council status and we are constantly looking at how we can operate more effectively and represent the people of Honiton in the best way possible. Listening to your views and obtaining your opinions on what is proposed for the Town is a key aspect of the Council's work. This year in addition to 'Talk of the Town' articles in the local press we have added more information to our website and looked at other ways of obtaining the views of those in our community. As part of this consultation in the summer we again had a stand at the Honiton Show

The Town Council is taking on more work as various services previously provided by East Devon District Council are being withdrawn. This has led to increased pressure on the Town Clerk and her staff, and to assist with the increased work we were, this year, pleased to appoint Sarah Jenkins in the role of Deputy Clerk. The Council now employs 5 part time staff, who all do much more than is expected of them. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the council, to thank them for all their hard work.

The Policy Committee is responsible for setting the Council's budget and the Council precept. This financial year the precept was £116,000, which is lower than any of our neighbouring towns. For the next financial year we have increased this to £139,993. This increase reflects the Council's decision to go ahead with the Community Complex in the new financial year. We are committed to provide value for money and in next year's budget have managed to maintain no increase in the Council's administration costs. Councillors have also agreed to freeze any increase on their allowances for the second year.

An essential role of the Council is supporting local groups and organisations. This year the Council increased the amount of those grants to the sum of £4,070. This was paid to 23 local organisations many of whom are dependant on our funding. We also provided funding of £1,000 for the Millennium Green, £1,000 for youth support, £500 for the Twinning Association and £300 for youth awards. We provided £9,000 to support the Tourist Information Centre and £10,000 to provide Christmas lights for the town. We have again been pleased to support renovation work in the Glen with a grant of £2,500. This supplements the funding the group have successfully obtained from grant making trusts.

The District Council will no longer provide floral displays in East Devon Towns, including Honiton. In response to this the Town Council is currently working with local schools and the Chamber of Commerce to ensure that floral displays continue in the town.

The many other items which the Council funds and supports range from Roundball Wood, local foot-paths and rights of way to bus shelters and the town clock on St Paul's Church. The Council continues to support the Senior Citizens Centre. This year has seen most of our historic photos and memorabilia passed to Allhallows Museum for safe custody and display. The premises have also had a repaint, which together with new chairs for the senior citizens, has given the building a fresh look.

The Council has a lobbying role on behalf of the Town. As part of this role we have campaigned for the re-opening of The Bungalow, a local resource for older people. The CEO of the Devon Partnership NHS, responsible for The Bungalow attended a public meeting to answer questions about the loss of services. The Council is continuing to pressure the Trust to ensure that the needs of older people with mental health problems in Honiton are fully met. The Council has also lobbied the District Council to reduce car parking fees and succeeded in obtaining limited free parking leading up to Christmas.

The Town Council is currently leading a Marketing Campaign to promote Honiton to local people, visitors and as a destination. This new initiative is in partnership with The Tourist Information Centre, the Community College and the Chamber of Commerce. The first of our posters '*Honiton the Town with something to Shout About!*' was launched at Honiton Show, and an official launch of the Marketing Plan will take place in March.

Chairman, Cllr Vernon Whitlock

EVERYONE'S TOMORROW

Conference and information fair organised by the Senior Council for Devon
10 am, Thursday 11th March 2010 - Matford Centre, Matford Park Road, Exeter EX2 8FD

HUNDREDS of older people from across Devon are to have the chance to hear in person the latest Government thinking on issues that particularly affect them, from health and social care to transport and social isolation.

The Everyone's Tomorrow conference and information fair in Exeter will host several high-profile speakers, including Angela Eagle MP, Minister for Pensions; John Hart, the leader of Devon County Council; the Chief Executive of NHS Devon; and, offering his thoughts on rural issues with a typically light touch, Tony Beard, BBC Radio Devon's Wag from Widecombe.

A question-and-answer session will be held at the Conference, which has been organised by the Senior Council for Devon, the countywide forum for people aged 50 and over. The information fair, attended by a range of health and social-care professionals and charity organisations, will run concurrently with the conference.

Everyone's Tomorrow will take place on Thursday 11 March 2010 starting at 10am at the Matford Centre, Matford Park Road, Exeter, EX2 8FD. It is a free event that is open to members of the public aged 50-plus,

For more information please contact telephone 01837 840562 or email arc.southtawton@virgin.net

VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

The *Sidekick* Project, part of East Devon Volunteer Support Agency, is searching for more Volunteer Buddies. *Sidekick* Buddies support people who are lacking in confidence, perhaps due to a learning difficulty or a mental health issue, to get involved in volunteering by working alongside them at their volunteering placement. Buddies are confident, able volunteers, who have great communication skills and who are interested in helping others to develop and learn new skills.

Volunteering is a great way to learn new skills, meet new people and contribute to your local community. To find out more about volunteering with *Sidekick* please contact Jacky Cox, Sidekick Project Co-ordinator, East Devon Volunteer Support Agency, Ridgeway House, Ridgeway, Ottery St. Mary EX11 1DT or telephone 01404 549045. Alternatively e-mail jacky.cox@edvsa.org.uk

DOES YOUR GROUP NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS?

The Devon Association of CVS are offering time and expertise on a range of volunteering issues to small (income under £40k) community and voluntary groups in the Parish. You may want to find out more about the Vetting and Barring Scheme or help with recruiting more volunteers - if so CVS can help. You will also be able to access regular updates on volunteering issues and have the opportunity to link into local networks if you want to. Interested? Contact Jenny Fish, County Co-ordinator by email jennyf@torridgecvcs.org.uk or telephone 01237 471136 and a local worker from East Devon CVS will arrange to come and see you.

TOWN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TMAC) REPORT

The TMAC meets quarterly to discuss a range of topics that affect our town; for example footpaths, roads, signage, parking, bus routes, trains, pollution etc. Representatives from Devon County Council, East Devon District Council, Highways Authorities, Police and Town Council members attend. A main topic for discussion is often the parking situation in the town. Over many years "commuter parking" has caused problems in many of our residential areas which are near the town centre. These problems have been exacerbated by increases in car parking fees (Lace Walk, Market Car Park, King Street)

The highways department has taken into account the comments from residents, and have put together plans to introduce new parking restrictions in some areas. It has been suggested on many occasions both by residents of problem areas and Councillors that "residents' parking" be introduced. The long-awaited plans for the High Street/New Street junction have recently been drawn up and agreed upon. These plans include traffic lights at the junction of the two roads, and a new pedestrian crossing on both.

The existing crossing in the centre of the High Street will be removed. It has also been agreed that the Taxi Rank near Barclays Bank will move to the opposite side of the road by the Manor House/Baptist Church. The Town Council are at present in talks with Devon County Council to discuss when these changes are to take place. It is anticipated that the work will take two to three weeks to complete and dates have to be arranged when the road works will cause the least disruption to shoppers, tourists, retailers and the street market.

Pollution is another subject which is being looked at, particularly in the Turks Head junction area, Dowell Street and Kings Road. Pollution levels are now being tested in all main areas of the town. The TMAC welcomes residents' suggestions and comments, and can be contacted via the Town Council Offices in New Street.

Chairman, Cllr Sally Casson