

Honiton Town Council

General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the General Purposes Committee held at the Council Offices, New Street, Honiton on Monday the Twenty-seventh day of October 2008

Members present

St Michael's Ward

Cllr A Boom
Cllr Mrs S A Casson (Vice-Chair)
Cllr M J Teare

St Paul's Ward

Cllr R E Coombs
Cllr R A Farnham
Cllr Mrs M D Morgan

25. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr Ash (personal), Cllr Gaughan (sickness), Cllr McNally (personal), Cllr Tratt (sickness).

26. Declarations of interest in items on the agenda.

None declared.

27. To review progress on P3 and non-P3 footpaths.

The Clerk had circulated a schedule of P3 and non-P3 footpaths following the recent annual inspections. Cllr Coombs advised Members that the inspections would be completed at the end of the week and a meeting had been arranged with the Clerk, Cllr Coombs and Cllr Fleming to look at budgets and priorities for the work to be undertaken.

Cllr Farnham asked for the latest position regarding access to the Gissage Walk at 207 High Street. The Clerk is pursuing this. It was agreed that there is a need to publicise the Gissage Walk once it is in place.

28. To receive an update on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Cllr Coombs advised that recent priorities had been the Definitive Map Review and footpath inspections. One right of way was affected by a potential eastern bypass and could not at this time be pursued. The other four areas were :

- New footbridge over the River Otter near Tracey
- Wadmore Lane
- Stout Loop
- Footpath 22

Cllr Coombs reported that most lanes were now in fairly good condition and that fact finding now needed to be undertaken to move this area of work forward.

29. To discuss progress on the Definitive Map Review.

Cllr Coombs advised Members that there were two areas to be considered when applying to have areas included in the DMR. These are :

- Where a footpath was adopted years ago
- Where it is believed there was a publicly maintained road that has been forgotten.

In both cases the Council needs to provide sufficient evidence to prove the claim.

Cllr Coombs reported that latest advice now indicates that the Council did not need to wait for the Review in order to register claims. These could be done via the County Solicitor and he advised that this would now be the route the Council would take. He also explained that the Honiton Review was taking a relatively long time compared with other areas – this was due to Honiton Borough having been its own Highway Authority which had only started to register its footpaths in 1939. This was much later than surrounding areas and means that evidence is often harder to find.

The Clerk was instructed to speak with the local press to appeal to local residents to come forward with relevant evidence to help this process.

30. To note the current situation with allotments.

The Clerk advised that a Honiton Allotment Association had been set up and a committee formed. The inaugural meeting had been very well attended by a broad representative group of 60 people from the waiting list.

A surveyor had now been identified who could work with the Council on the environmental survey and the planning application. An initial visit to the site had been made and the surveyor had not identified any initial problems with the site at Honiton Bottom Road. The Clerk was awaiting a quotation for the work, which would then proceed.

East Devon/Honiton members had spoken with East Devon District Council planning department about progress with the allotments.

The Council continued to receive occasional letters of protest. All of these had received replies. The waiting list continued to grow.

31. To receive an update on developments concerning Boundary Review for Devon.

In Cllr McNally's absence, the Clerk advised Members that the Council had received a copy of Devon County Council's response to the Boundary Committee's "Draft Proposal for Unitary Local Government in Devon" dated September 2008. She outlined the section relating to future collaboration with parish and town councils. Following discussion, the committee agreed to recommend to the Town Council that Honiton apply to be considered as a pilot authority during the proposed change to unitary status and instructed the Clerk to prepare a briefing paper for the meeting in November.

It was noted that the Devon County Council response included reference to a separate Community Board for the Blackdown Hills parishes, which was welcomed.

The Clerk advised that the first meeting with surrounding parishes had been very well attended and it was intended to hold the second meeting on 9th December. She would be sending out advice of this meeting very shortly. Cllr Coombs asked that parishes which had been formerly associated with Honiton when it was a Borough Council be included and this was agreed.

32. To review the Town Council's strategy with regards to the Local Development Framework.

In Cllr Ash's absence, the Clerk read out a message in which she expressed her concerns about progress on this matter. She felt there was a need to have vision and a strategic view that crosses boundaries between subject areas and doubted whether she was adequately chairing the group.

Cllr Teare suggested that the group continue to look at developments topic by topic but that the most appropriate Councillor chair the group for that particular session. Cllr Coombs expressed the view that the Council and wider population were not fully aware of the implications of the LDF and asked that the Clerk prepare a briefing paper for the Town Council meeting in November so that this could be discussed further. This was agreed.

33. To discuss the Government White Paper "Communities in Control".

The Executive Summary of the White Paper had been circulated. Cllr Teare advised that he felt the sentiments of the Paper were welcomed but the Council needed to look at how the proposals were to be actioned. Cllr Coombs expressed his concern that town and parish councils were being bypassed by some of the recommendations. Cllr Boom asked whether the Council were yet considering the introduction of public speaking at meetings and the Clerk advised that discussion of this topic had been postponed in Policy committee meetings but was planned to be an agenda item for the Policy meeting in November. Cllr Farnham proposed that the Clerk prepare an action plan against the Communities in Control recommendations for the Town Council meeting in November and this was agreed.

34. The Chair closed the meeting at 7.55 pm.