

Question asked by Mr John Burgess

Dear Cllr Zarczynski

I have written to the clerk to ask for a formal written response to the question I put to the council last night. I had expected a verbal response when the item came up but you declined to give an answer so I now need one in writing.

Last month I asked this question in the HTC meeting:

Q2. And will he seek the support for his leadership by resigning and putting himself up for re-election in May

Response from the Mayor of Honiton:- No, my resignation has been asked for in the recent past and I have and continue to decline. **The elections planned for May 2021 will provide an opportunity for the Council and its various roles to be democratically elected.**

Last month you were all in favour of the elections giving opportunity for the **various roles to be democratically elected**, this month you voted against the very thing you were in favour of.

The vote to hold the Town Meeting before the May elections went against the council's own Risk List as I stated last night. Let me remind you of it:

Item 18: Actions of Council have a negative impact on community.

Risk score of 16, mitigated to 12.

The mitigated actions are: **Councillors to represent community via election** / co-option
Progress on this is: **Elections planned for 6 May 2021**. Community Governance Review petition received by EDDC

Perhaps you consider the Risk List to be unimportant or perhaps you think the reputation of the council is so bad it cannot get any worse. In any event you showed you have no concern about a negative impact on the community, the very people you were elected to serve.

Everyone present at last night's meeting knew **there was no good reason** not to hold the Town Meeting after the elections on May 6th. I stated in my question that a face-to-face meeting could be held in The Beehive main hall. The meeting would be quorate in accordance with the DALC advice. **You will have to meet face to face in June so why not May?**

No, the only reason for holding a meeting before May 6th is to make sure you and your six followers get to decide who shall be Mayor and Deputy. In taking this decision you show utter disregard for the electorate and contempt for democracy.

I was also shocked in last night's meeting at the attack from you and other councillors on members of the public and the Monitoring Officer who had simply been doing their democratic duty. I have every sympathy for Cllr Gilson over what happened in that unfortunate Zoom meeting, but **the members of the public watching had no knowledge of what lay behind her problem with the vote and could not know about her health issues**. I wrote to Heloise asking if the meeting was quorate, she took advice and it was declared inquorate. Others protested directly to the Monitoring Officer who was bound to act in accordance with the law. All the protests from councillors last night, defending Cllr Gilson were **after the fact** and nothing to do with the actual issue. It was right for Cllr Gilson to make her apology and I shall convey my thanks to her for doing so. Would that other councillors followed her example.

I also found your protest to Cllr Twiss about car park charges to be very hypocritical as you are going to turn the free car park at the Beehive to a charging one. Pot and Kettle come to mind.

Yours sincerely

John Burgess

Response from the Mayor of Honiton:-

Dear Mr Burgess

I will focus on your one specific question: The Annual Town Council meeting will be on 4 May 2021 which will decide the Mayor and Deputy. Council decided to have the Annual Town meeting on 12 April 2021 before the May 2021 by-elections not least to help inform people's vote. Annual Council will agree the diary of meetings for 21/22. HTC noted the DALC advice and options at its meeting in February 2021. DALC's advice is clearly that whilst there are options it suggests that the Annual Town Council meets whilst the current legislation is in force which permits virtual remote meetings. Council is following advice from DALC and will comply with legislation concerning meetings at that time.

I take this opportunity to remind you that your behaviour at Monday's 8/3/21 Full Council meeting was unacceptable and will not be tolerated and consequently Council voted to have you excluded from the meeting, which is an unusual step taken in the most severe cases. I suggest that you do not repeat your behaviour or again risk exclusion.

There are of course two meetings being planned: Annual Town meeting and Annual Town Council meeting. HTC decided at Monday's 8/3/21 meeting to hold both before HTC's May 2021 by-elections. I cannot see that those decisions are contrary to what is stated in Risk 18. The processes of by-election; co-option; election to committees and roles; and annual meetings are legal and democratic. Full Council 08/03/21 considered the annual meetings and resolved under Agenda items 12 and 13. Your questions beforehand during public questions (which were relevant to items 12 and 13) may have informed Council decision.

Regards
Cllr Zarczynski

Question asked by Mr Jake Bonetta

We would like to ask the Full Council, and Cllr. Gilson directly, the following four questions:

- **What evidence or statistics can you provide to the residents of Honiton that these kind donations have been returned to vulnerable members of the Honiton community?**
Town Councils reply - the Town Council does not have such evidence or statistics; that does not suggest that there are none, simply that the Town Council does not have that information.
- **Given the evidence and arguments provided, why was the decision taken by Cllr. Gilson to divert these donations away from groups in Honiton?**
Town Councils reply - this is a question for Cllr Gilson (acting in her individual capacity) and not the Town Council.
- **Considering the above, why were the various groups in Honiton not consulted and asked whether a soup kitchen or equivalent could be organised specifically for the residents of Honiton?**
Town Councils reply - the Town Council has not undertaken a project to accept donations and so therefore has not consulted.
- **Why was this published and promoted by the Council as a Council-endorsed activity, when this seems to break the Nolan Principles of public life?**
Town Councils reply - donations were made to Cllr Gilson acting her individual capacity and not a Town Council activity.