

## **HONITON TOWN COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE**

### **RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE LONG-TERM FUTURE OF THE BEEHIVE**

The Beehive is owned by Honiton Town Council (HTC) and is leased to Honiton Community Complex (HCC) to be run as a charity, for the benefit of the community. HTC retain three small rooms within the Beehive, from which the Council operates. In return, HTC pay a service charge of £10K p/a to the running and maintenance of the Beehive. Since Covid, HCC's predictions for 2022 was that there would be insufficient income to balance its books. In February this year HCC gave notice to end its lease.

To provide continuity whilst the future is decided, HTC voted in principle to cover HCC's losses for a period of up to twelve months, on a three-month rolling basis, reviewed every month. Since the money from this comes from the rates, HTC decided to consult the public on the future of the Beehive.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022 HTC carried out an all day public consultation outside the Mackarness Hall. An on-line version of the consultation was also provided, running until 5th August. Information was provided about the operation of the Beehive sufficient for the public to rank HTC's options for the future of the venue. Those options were as follows:

Option 1 – To continue to financially support HCC until the end of the 10-year lease in September 2025, to make time for HCC to manage its financial performance back to full independence (with HTC's £10K service charge) if possible.

Option 2 –The Beehive continues to be operated by a charity in the longer term.

Option 3 –The Beehive is owned by the Council but leased, managed and run as a commercial organisation.

Option 4 –The Beehive is sold.

The results of the consultation were as follows:

There were 694 valid responses and of those 364 were from residents of Honiton CP (Civil Parish). Of the 316 respondents who live outside of Honiton, 239 live in small villages or other rural locations and 77 live in larger villages, towns or cities.

Option 1 was selected by 74% of all respondents as their first choice. Of those whose first choice was Option 1, 40% live in Honiton CP and therefore 60% outside. When those who voted Option 2 as their first choice are added to these figures, 90% of all respondents, including 90% of those who live in Honiton, wish to see the Beehive continue to be run by a charity.

Both Option 3 and Option 4 were chosen by only about 3% of all respondents as their first choice.

There is a clear mandate from the respondents to the public consultation, for Honiton Town Councillors to continue to support Honiton Community Complex running the Beehive up to the end of its lease in 2025. HTC Councillors have been doing this on a month-by-month basis.

The council may continue to financially support/underwrite HCC until the end of its lease of the Beehive (September 2025) or earlier to make time for HCC to manage its financial performance back to full independence (with HTC's £10K service charge) if possible.

**Town Clerk – 19<sup>th</sup> October 2022**