

The Future of The Beehive

Honiton is a growing town, with a great future. As it continues to develop, so it becomes more diverse in terms of the people living here and in the surrounding areas. Having a modern and vibrant facility such the Beehive is important as a centre in which the spirit of the community can flourish.

However, with the impact of a hike in energy bills, driving a steep rise in inflation and all on top of the global Covid pandemic, the Town Council is looking carefully at how it spends your money. The Work Programme and its priorities are being reviewed and the budget for the year is being recast.

Amongst its assets the Town Council owns the Beehive community building, which it leased in 2015 for 10 years, to Honiton Community Complex (HCC), to be operated as a community venue. HCC has done this successfully for the last 7 years but because of post Covid financial consequences, it gave Notice in February 2022 to terminate the lease. Operating the Beehive without a tenant would of course have substantial financial implications for the Town Council. After careful consideration of all the alternatives then open to us, on 28th February 2022 the Town Council agreed to underwrite HCC's costs from 7th March 2022 on a 3 months rolling basis, for a maximum of 12 months. Based on that decision, HCC withdrew Notice at the end of March 2022.

On 9th May 2022, the Town Council authorised the first contribution to HCC for £3,869.97, to cover the shortfall in its March 2022 accounts. The Town Council consider that underwriting HCC's costs in the short term is the most cost effective way of addressing the situation but will continue to review its decision at each monthly Council meeting.

The Council is working closely and cooperatively with HCC and discussions are positive. The aim is to retain the Beehive open to the community, for events/shows and therefore continue to generate revenue to pay its way as much as possible. The Beehive continues to be open for business, with a full programme of events and there is hope that the recent increases in audience numbers will continue.

In addition to its working with HCC, the Town Council has established a Working Group to decide on its future strategy for the building. There is a considerable amount of work to be carried out, to a tight timescale. The

intention is to generate options to present for public consultation at the end July 2022. At that point information will be given and people will be able to contribute their ideas. These will inform the Council's ultimate decision.

Both HTC and HCC recognise the importance of ensuring that the services provided by the Beehive for local residents can continue well into the future.