

ANNUAL REPORT 2014 -2015

Chairman's Report

The Town Council has been working to improve our community and the lives of those who live in it by improving the facilities in our open spaces, our sports, our play areas.

We have worked with EDDC in putting forward 3 projects that met the eligibility criteria for s106 funding. As the cost did not exceed the amount available (approx £50,000) all projects were supported resulting in a new petanque pitch, an improved and safer spectator area for rugby matches and the development of a sports wall.

In addition local schools have been contacted with regards to the play projects and three play parks have been identified for improvements. The play areas in order of priority are: Langford Road, Butts Close and Streamers Meadow. The next steps will be to produce various designs and the local schools will be asked to select their favourite.

The Town Council has been involved in various consultations relating to cutbacks in services and on each occasion has strongly objected to the proposals.

The past year your Town Council has as been working very hard on your behalf including producing our Talk of the Town newsletter every quarter, the marshalling of Hot Pennies, Charter day, Armed Forces and working closely with the Chamber of Commerce promoting the Town and its businesses.

This year saw the start of making Honiton a dementia friendly town, Honiton Together Project to improve communications between various volunteers and organisations and the newly formed Honiton Youth Group.

The Town Council has also been able to assist many local groups with grants. Many people are involved and work hard to run and support these groups and I would like to thank each one on behalf of us for all that they do. We have continued to support the young people and obtained funding for two qualified youth workers to manage one session per week at the Youth Centre. We have also provided assistance to many of the Town's services such as Tourist Information Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, Honiton Antiques Festival, Food Bank and TRIP in order that they may continue with their work.

Councillors continue being involved in essential community organisations such as Charter Day, Hot Pennies, community cinema, Roundball Wood, The Glen and Millennium Green to name but a few.

The Town Council has also been busy in preparation for a neighbourhood plan specifically relating to Honiton to ensure your views are taken into account through various consultations.

Much of the Town Council's time this year has been taken with ensuring proper process and obtaining professional advice regarding decisions on the management of Honiton Community Complex and I would like to thank all those dedicated people who have worked tirelessly towards this.

The Beehive, Honiton's Community Complex has been in operation for just over 12 months and I would like to thank all the Directors of the company who will be managing the Beehive and the many volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure that a variety of activities and events take place. I have every confidence in the Directors and I am positive they will continue to do a wonderful job of ensuring these facilities are available for all members of the community.

I would particularly like to thank the Deputy and Chair of the Planning Committee, John Zarczynski, Gary Elliot for chairing the Policy Committee and Les Bayliss for chairing the Finance Committee and to Councillors, Vivienne Ash, Nick Cornwell, Gary Elliot, Sharon Pavey and Nick Boggon who are all standing down.

I would also like to thank the Town Crier, Dave Retter, who is a real credit to the Town acting as an ambassador for Honiton throughout the country.

Finally I would like to thank the council staff for all their hard work and dedication to the Council.

Cllr Peter Halse - Mayor



Policy Committee Report

Before I report on the activity of the Policy Committee I would like to remind everyone why the Policy Committee was set up. Many issues to be considered by the Town Council require longer debate than a ten minute slot in a monthly meeting of the Town Council will allow. Therefore the purpose of the Policy Committee is to allow the Town Council time to consider these policies and procedural matters in depth and make recommendations which need to be agreed by the full Council. The Policy Committee is open to all Councillors and as an indicator of the importance attached to the Policy Committee currently all 16 of the serving Town Councillors are members of this committee.

During the past year the Policy Committee has considered and made recommendations on many issues and I have selected a few to share with you:

Firstly we started with a review of issues the Policy Committee could consider to be more of an outward nature. The issues identified were:

- Engaging with the Community
- An insight into Community Infrastructure Levy
- Affordable Housing
- Understanding Funding Streams
- Sports requirement for Honiton and East Devon District Council's Sports Strategy
- Ensuring a full quota of Councillors at the elections
- Neighbourhood Plan
- Use of Social Media and improving Communications
- Pedestrianisation of the High Street

Engaging with the public: A series of meet your councillor sessions were held on Saturdays in the High Street and issues (including some positive comments) were highlighted and actions identified.

Future development and Infrastructure: Work relating around the Community Infrastructure Levy, affordable housing and neighbourhood plan has been held up due to the delay in the development of the Local Plan. A working group has been assigned to review the change in s106 funding that is being implemented in April. A working group on the Neighbourhood Plan has also been set up who have started consulting with the community and neighbouring parishes.

Sports Strategy: A meeting was held to engage the public in identifying the needs of local sports clubs to incorporate this into the East Devon District Council's sports strategy. The Town Council was asked to provide comments to the strategy and urged EDDC to make good the deficiencies of the existing facilities as highlighted in the strategy and also the lack of open space within the confines of the town.

Social media: The media policy was reviewed with the intention to add the use of social media. However it was felt that further research was required and that a few councillors were asked to research concerns and report back.

The Policy Committee reviewed the parking order for the Beehive car park to ensure it was for general use as a public car park.

Now that the Town Council office is at The Beehive we reviewed the health and safety policy to reflect all health and safety matters and incorporate changes in the law.

We also looked at the Risk register and also introduced a new simpler risk index for publishing on the website.

On a more sensitive subject we reviewed the Code of Conduct for all members of the Council and Standing Order to ensure that rules were clearly defined.

We reviewed the changes in legislation on Openness and Transparency, produced a policy on preparing of minutes and changes to Quality Status following the introduction of the new Local Council Award Scheme.

We have ensured that Parishes Together funding was obtained for two projects to support both people with Alzheimers & Dementia and the youth of Honiton and surrounding areas.

We also reviewed the Silverline Project, a national helpline service to provide comfort to lone senior citizens and made recommendations that this project be promoted through the website and noticeboards.

We agreed to set up a small working group to review the flowerbeds and identify the work needed to ensure that they are well maintained and provided an attractive focal point when entering the Town.

Finally I would like to highlight the Town Council's responses to the Devon County Council budget review and proposed cuts in Highways services, waste management and transport services. The Policy Committee formulated responses to each of these proposed cuts expressing our unanimous opposition to the cuts and suggestions on how the services could be improved.

Cllr Gary Elliot – Chair of Policy Committee

Planning Committee Report

Firstly I would like to thank the members of the Planning Committee for their dedication and commitment to fulfilling the Town Council's role as a consultee on planning applications for the town and parish of Honiton.

In particular I would like to thank Cllrs Gary Elliot and Nick Boggon for their work and support as they will not be standing again for re-election in May 2015.

The Planning Committee has continued to meet fortnightly and, by the year end, had considered 115 applications for various private dwellings, business premises, tree works, advert applications and works to listed buildings or buildings in the Honiton Conservation Area.

All Town Councillors receive the agenda and are able to attend and speak at meetings, but only members of the Committee may vote. This has continued to work well in that it allows all Councillors to participate where applications for larger scale development are under discussion. Members of the public also have the opportunity to attend and participate in Committee meetings and this involvement is welcomed and appreciated.

The Town Council has continued to follow progress with the new East Devon Local Plan following last year's enquiry and remains committed to playing a full part in planning issues for the wider area. Good working relationships with the neighbouring parishes of Gittisham and Awliscombe have been maintained and it is anticipated that all three parishes will consult and work together on planning and neighbourhood planning matters where it is appropriate to do so.

The Planning Committee, representing the Town Council, was able to support the outline application for up to 150 new homes on land at Ottery Moor Lane and will continue to work to ensure that Honiton is a good place to live, work and conduct business.

Cllr John Zarczynski – Chair of Planning Committee

Finance Committee Report

The Finance Committee usually meets on a quarterly basis, with additional meetings as required. The purpose of the committee is to review all financial matters which relate to council activities including staff issues.

The committee has met 7 times during this financial period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015 and has made several recommendations to full council for their approval. At quarterly meeting members view all cheques that have been issued during the period as well as scrutinising the quarterly income and expenditure details and the reconciliation report. Other matters that have passed through the Finance Committee during this period are:

- New signage
- Staff pension changes
- The council's risk management register
- Additional borrowing requirements in relation to the building of the Beehive
- Grants for community groups
- Review of the asset register
- Proposal for a new council storage area
- Members' allowances
- Review of financial audit reports
- Annual budget/precept forecast

Budget/precept

Over the past few years setting the council budget/precept has been difficult set against the national austerity measures taken by central Government. The Finance Committee is well aware of the financial impact any increase in the precept has on the community, however, the committee has to ensure that sufficient funds are available for the council to meet its obligations to the community. This year (2015/16) the precept has been increased by 2.8%, which equates to an increase of approximately £1.56 per year per household. The precept was set against a further reduction of the EDDC Council Tax grant of 15%.

Towards the later part of 2014/15 period financial questions regarding the interim payments and the final account for the building of the Beehive have been debated by the Finance Committee. As a result of the debates it was recommended to full council to draw down the PWLB loan of £98,000. This loan is to be used to (a) cover costs to pay some of the variations in building costs, (b) pay any remaining building costs associated with the final building accounts. Many of the variations in building costs are under dispute with the contractors, project management team and the council. The loan repayment did not add any additional costs to the 2015/16 precept.

During the 2014/15 financial period money from the precept was used to cover the annual expenditure for providing administration, staffing, marketing and environmental services to the town. Funding was also made available for providing grants to various community organisations such as:

Tourist Information Centre
 Citizen Advice Bureau
 Youth Support
 Charter Day
 Hot Pennies
 Christmas Lights
 Community groups

The total money given in grants during 2014 was £12,650. This coming financial year 2015/16 will see further grants being awarded to various community groups and organisations.

It is hoped that income can be generated from the car park at Dowell Street which was acquired in the transfer of land from East Devon to build the Beehive.

The Finance Committee will continue to oversee expenditure and other financial issues when they arise and where appropriate make all necessary recommendations to council. It will strive to maintain stability and financial openness to the community.

Cllr Les Bayliss - Chair of Finance

HONITON TOWN COUNCIL STATEMENT INCOME/EXPENDITURE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2015

INCOME	2013/14 £	2014/15 £	EXPENDITURE	2013/14 £	2014/15 £
Precept & Council Tax Grant	176143.00	218990.00	Council Expenses	7188.00	5273.00
Street Market Income	31528.00	28511.50	Subscriptions	1358.00	1618.00
Bank Interest	806.00	1.00	Environment and Tourism	16360.00	4828.00
HMRC	0.00	18041.00	Parishes Together	11233.00	9980.00
DCC	360.00	200.00	Grants	14704.00	13221.00
EDDC	2830.00	2870.00	Rent	0.00	19319.00
Parishes Together	12610.00	9980.00	Ongoing Grants	2224.00	300.00
Rent	430.00	0.00	Premises	6399.00	4329.00
Donations/Sponsorship	75.00	1993.00	Handover of New Street	0.00	4375.00
Misc Income	257.00	28.00	Staffing Costs	90258.00	82690.00
Beehive - Fundraising, Donations & Grants	640596.00	106151.00	Administration	13541.00	17034.00
Beehive Fitting Out Dona- tions	33480.00	37249.00	Market running costs	5067.00	2127.00
TOTAL INCOME	899115.00	424014.50	Beehive Construction	1868648.00	190145.00
			Beehive Loans and Fees	126402.00	57994.00
			Beehive Fitting Out	30649.00	54456.00
			TOTAL EXPENDITURE	2194031.00	467689.00
			Transfer earmarked figure	175295.00	118192.00
			Transfer investments for Bee- hive	1119621.00	0.00
			Sub total	899115.00	349497.00
			Net Income/Expenditure	0.00	74517.50
			Earmarked and Reserves	198930.00	80738.00

TOWN CLERK: Mrs. Chetna Jones DEPUTY CLERK: Mrs. Sarah Jenkins
Town Council Offices, The Beehive, Dowell Street, Honiton, Honiton EX14 1LZ
Tel/Fax: 01404 42957 townCouncil@honiton.gov.uk www.honiton.gov.uk