



## ANNUAL REPORT 2022 -2023

### Chairman's Report

Firstly, I would like to deal with certain issues that relate to the previous administration. I can now confirm that all legal matters have been resolved and the Council is now in a position where it has no outstanding costly legal proceedings. I stated last year that the Council were resolved to maintain the very best standards of behaviour and debate and we continue to be committed to full adherence to the Nolan Principles, which govern public service, by upgrading our Code of Conduct and signing the national Civility and Respect Pledge.

We were pleased to have the opportunity to celebrate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee, for which I would like to thank all those who worked so hard to make it an occasion to remember. Unfortunately, this was followed by the sad death of Her Majesty, which was tempered by the proclamation of the new King, a role which I was very proud to undertake. We are very much looking forward to celebrating the Coronation and during this coming year we will also be joining with our twinned towns (Mezidon-Canon in France and Gronau in Germany) to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our twinning arrangement.

During Parliament Week a number of councillors visited the Scouts, Brownies, the Community College and Air Cadets and the Council is keen to follow up on these connections by establishing a Youth Council, which would help us to identify and address the needs of young people in the town and give them a voice.

The chairs of respective committees will report on their work programmes separately, so I will not duplicate that information in this report. However, we have given a significant amount of money in grants to charities and organisations and have ring-fenced £10,000 specifically to address the cost of living crisis. We have worked collaboratively with the Library, the CUB building, the Community College, Family Church and the Beehive in establishing warm spaces, thereby providing free access to a warm environment for people who were unable to afford their heating during cold weather.

During this year we held a public consultation on the future of the Beehive, following a temporary setback which the Council assisted in resolving. The outcome of that consultation was an overwhelming response to support the Beehive to the end of its lease in 2025 and to date the Council has managed to follow through on those wishes. A new arrangement has been negotiated for the next financial year and I hope this will secure the Beehive's future, as it is unquestionably an asset to the town. Nevertheless the Council is conscious of the need to ensure best value for money and this situation is therefore constantly under review.

The Council has resisted the transfer of assets from East Devon District Council, for example the toilets in King Street, which would have resulted in considerable cost to the Honiton taxpayer. Indeed, we have listened to residents' concerns over the 'Local Plan' and this has been reflected in our response to EDDC. We have been invited to take part in numerous civic events, including the Carnival, Charter Day, Hot Pennies, switching on the Christmas lights and Remembrance Day, where I have been proud to represent Honiton as the Town Mayor, along with my Council colleagues and the Town Crier, Dave Retter.

Councillors are very ably supported by an excellent group of staff and I would like to pay tribute to their efforts in keeping us on the straight and narrow. This has not been an easy task, bearing in mind the majority of councillors are new to this role. Due to the experience and expertise of our Clerk, Stephen Hill, and our Deputy Clerk, Heloise Marlow, complex issues and policies have been carefully navigated in the work of the Council. We have updated policies and carried out staff appraisals, recognising the good work carried out by Carolyn Bowles and Dawn Reed, which has been invaluable to us new councillors. Sadly we said goodbye to Lee Leppington, our Market Superintendent, who resigned for personal reasons, but are delighted to welcome Bertie Rawlings in his stead.

Our next challenge will be the local elections, during which all councillors will either resign their positions or stand again for election. I am hopeful that the new Council will continue to respect the views of others, whether or not they accord with their own, and to create an environment where respect and civility are valued and fear and intimidation will not be tolerated.

**Cllr Serena Sexton**  
**Chairman of Honiton Town Council**

## **Finance & Policy Committee Report**

Accounts audited with minor adjustments passed. Recommended to full Council in February and adopted in March 2023, the revised Financial Regulations based on the NALC model. The precept was set to remain the same as this year to take into account the cost of living crisis. Grants were given to various organisations and charities and £10,000 was earmarked and distributed to specific needs based on the cost of living crisis – this included Honiton Community College, the Library and the Family Church. The Council also contributed to the warm spaces initiative. The councillors are very aware this will have to be taken into account for the forthcoming winter. We are pleased to be able to report all employment tribunals and legal disputes have been resolved. In July, following a public consultation it was agreed that the Council would give financial support to the Honiton Community Complex to prevent the lease being handed back earlier than the 10 years given. Since that time the Council and the charity that runs the Beehive have worked together to produce a financially viable plan to provide services to Honiton residents.

In order to provide this safety net the main budgets for committees have been recast. The new Code of Conduct has been adopted which should secure good behaviour by all councillors for the future.

As a new councillor I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow councillors and the staff at Honiton Town Council for their support and guidance which has been invaluable.

**Cllr Cathy Maunder**  
**Deputy Chair of the Finance & Policy Committee**

## **King's Coronation and Queen's Platinum Jubilee Working Groups Reports**

The King's Coronation Working Group are working hard to provide the local community with a special event to celebrate together. We are planning a "Big Lunch" on Allhallows with lots of entertainment, food and drinks all provided by our residents. We are inviting people to come down to Allhallows from 11am–2pm with a picnic blanket. After 2pm we will continue the day with disco music and live bands performing until 10pm. Also attending are our local Air Cadets, Army Cadets, Police Cadets, Guiding and Scouting Groups and Honiton Majorettes, who will all be showcasing what they do.

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee working group was made up of councillors and members of the community that came together and managed to provide a four-day event of celebrations. Our aim was to provide a free event that would support our local community. We started with the Lighting of the Beacon, it was amazing to see so many people of all ages climbing the hill to kick start the weekend; members from Honiton Band attended along with a bagpiper to play the traditional music. Friday was the Grand Opening of Honiton's Allotments. Saturday was started off with a Fun Run, this was attended by families, walkers and established runners. We also had a large sporting event taking place on Allhallows. Lots of our local sports clubs came down and put on displays of what they do, this included dancers, gymnasts, footballers, karate and thai kick-boxing. In the evening was a large street disco, the High Street was closed and many people came to enjoy the music. On Sunday we had a larger than normal parade from Dowell Street up to St Paul's Church, this was concluded by the Air Cadets putting on a drill presentation. Afterwards we had the 'Big Tea' which again despite the weather forecast, was very well attended. The entire four days were amazing, so very well attended and fantastic to see so many people enjoying themselves. I would like to say thank you to the members of the working group that worked tirelessly for months to put this event together, you were an amazing team to work with. It wouldn't have happened without your dedication to Honiton and I'm sure I can speak for everyone when I say thank you to the residents of Honiton for attending and making so many fantastic memories. Thank you.

**Cllr Kate Cloke**  
**Kings Coronation Working Group**

## **Town Management Committee Report**

As a town council we have taken on and planned numerous projects:-

War Memorial - this year we have steam cleaned it top to bottom, removing years of dirt from the top. We have fitted a chain fence around the memorial after many complaints about people standing and sitting on it. Also, thanks to the Scouts for hand cleaning the bottom yearly.

Access ramp - getting onto the High Street to and from Lace Walk car park between Manor House and the family church has always been difficult for wheelchairs and push chairs. We have now built a ramp to help with easy access.

Battishorne Way allotments - we are now at the final stage of this project in the coming months with landscaping this area. All pitches have been allocated and are now operational.

CCTV power supply - after many years on temporary power supply we have finally installed mains supply to our system this with a long-term view to have full time monitoring of the CCTV at Exeter Central Control room.

Christmas lights - another successful display to light up Honiton during the Christmas period 2022 along with Chamber of Commerce main Christmas tree to complete the celebration.

Street Market - relocation of the market to meet our safety obligations and condense the market.

Temporary delay in completion due to National Grid works on the High Street, to be completed soon and we can stabilise the market layout again.

Market Superintendent - challenging year but we have successfully employed a new Superintendent who is now actively working hard on improvements.

Maintenance staff - maintaining our town and surrounding area has become more difficult for District and County Councils, as a Town Council we need to work with all our partners to maintain and improve Honiton's presentation to visitor and of course our residents. We have now employed an Orderly (who will also be a Market Assistant when required) along with long term projects which we hope the new councillors will proceed with in the next election term.

Chapter 8 training - we have now pulled together a team of volunteers made up from councillors, council staff and members of other originations who will attend a course later this month. This will give the town trained marshalls for community events and road closures.

Bus shelters - finally upgrading all our units plus adding two more at Heath Park, planned for installation by end of May 2023

Children safety - Clapper Lane has always been a concern for school children safety in crossing the road and vehicle parking, this year we have been working with Devon County Council and offered to part fund an agreed crossing with other parking restriction, which we hope will be installed in July this year.

Queen 's Platinum Jubilee - many thanks to the working group which was made up of councillors and members of the public who volunteered to make the Jubilee a very successful event.

King's Coronation - again the working group are working hard planning this event to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles 3<sup>rd</sup> on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2023 in Allhallows Field.

**Cllr Tony McCollum**

**Chair of the Town Management Committee**

## **Green & Open Spaces Committee Report**

The committee have been working to enhance the green and open spaces in Honiton within Honiton Town Councils limited powers and resources. We have inspected the P3 footpaths and have reported some repairs and replacement signage to be resolved. Our contractor is now in phase 2 of the repair works at Roundball Wood.

The committee extensively researched the possibility of having a barrier in place at the top of Footpath 27 on Whitmore Way, we concluded that the cost of placing a barrier and the upkeep were too high, on land that is owned by the crown. We have more recently agreed to support the use of swift boxes around Honiton, a project led by Honiton's Community Action Group. The committee have also been a consultee on public spaces protection orders for EDDC. We have discussed starting Honiton in Bloom, for this to happen we will be looking for local residents to join us in planting and maintaining the green spaces around Honiton.

**Cllr Kate Cloke**

**Chair of the Green & Open Spaces Committee**

## Strategy Committee Report

The strategy committee was formed in September 2021 to fill a vital gap in the services of the Council at the time: developing strategies and increasing our public engagement. This was to ensure that we always looked forwards with our policies, and created an atmosphere of positive transparency for our residents. I believe the strategy committee has made important steps towards that, albeit with other complications that have come our way not least due to issues surrounding the Beehive. During this Council year, the committee has spent much of its time working with the Beehive working group to develop an overarching approach to the future of the Beehive. This has meant that some other projects have been left for the new civic year – a move which I believe has been sensible to make. The committee has supported the Beehive working group in its scoping work surrounding the current state of play with the Beehive's tenant, Honiton Community Complex, and has helped support discussions around their emerging business plan and the working relationship between HCC and the Town Council as landlord. It has also worked to ensure the continued success of the building following the end of this lease period, with a tender document being created well in advance of the September 2025 end date. As part of this, the committee worked on the successful Beehive Future Public Consultation in the summer of 2022, giving the Council the public input that it needed to help inform its decision-making around the strategy for the building. I am pleased that the consultation received 730 responses, making it more successful than a number of East Devon-wide consultations and falling within the recognised quotas for population-representative polling. Working towards a community strategy, the committee has created a Statement of Evidenced Need Aligned to Actions. It is hoped that this document, containing large amounts of data on Honiton and its surrounding areas, will be used by the incoming Council to inform its council strategy for the next electoral term. The committee has also supported the work of the Council's new PR Consultants, Breakthrough Communications, in providing better communications with the wider town around subjects ranging from elections to the Beehive. As the outgoing chair of the committee and an outgoing councillor, I want to pay tribute to all members and staff – current and past - who have supported this committee's work since its inception in 2021. Without your hard work, many of the forward-looking aspects that we now see within our organisation wouldn't have been possible. I wish the incoming cohort all the best with the next Council term.

**Cllr Jake Bonetta - Chair of the Strategy Committee**

## Planning Committee Report

The planning committee holds more meetings in the year than any other committee, generally at the rate of two per month. From and including May 2022 to 22nd March 2023 seventeen meetings were held and the median attendance by planning committee members was 4. Planning applications, which are all forwarded from East Devon District Council Planning Committee (EDDC), range from advertising signs and the trimming of trees, through changes to houses and buildings, up to new housing developments. During the period identified above, the planning committee reviewed ninety-seven planning applications and of these Honiton Town Council (HTC) supported ninety, eighty-four unanimously. Twenty-seven applications were supported conditional on approval from an EDDC expert, such as the Arboriculturist, Heritage Officer, Listed Building Control, etc. Following consideration by HTC, planning applications are returned to EDDC for their approval or refusal. Fifty-nine of the applications supported by HTC planning committee went on to be approved by EDDC. Currently there are twenty planning applications reviewed by HTC but awaiting a decision by EDDC. There were six instances where HTC and EDDC did not agree on planning applications. They were evenly split between one side agreeing with the application and the other not. However, EDDC decisions are final at this level. The planning committee were asked by Honiton Full Council to comment on the developing EDDC Local Plan. The majority of the sites around Honiton were not supported, mainly because they were proposed to be built within the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The comments were supported by Honiton Full Town Council and submitted to EDDC.

**Cllr Robert Fowles - Chair of the Planning Committee**

**TOWN CLERK: Mr Stephen Hill      DEPUTY CLERK: Mrs. Heloise Marlow**  
**Town Council Offices, The Beehive, Dowell Street, Honiton, Honiton EX14 1LZ**  
**Tel 01404 42957      towncouncil@honiton.gov.uk      www.honiton.gov.uk**