

Question:

Honiton Town Council Meeting - February 10th

Mon 10/02/2025 11:31

With reference to agenda items 17 and 21 of this evening's Town Council Meeting. We have two queries;

Agenda 17 : Please clarify how the challenge to the status of HCC (Honiton Community Complex), currently being investigated by the external auditor, is progressing, and the resulting implications for this agenda item (the lease tender),

Agenda 21 : Please clarify how the challenge to the status of HCC, currently being investigated by the external auditor, is progressing, and the resulting implications for this agenda item (underwriting the November losses of HCC).

Also, can the Town Clerk confirm that he has provided all Councillors with full information on any possible personal financial risks to themselves?

Regards
John Zarczynski
Phil Carrigan
John Taylor (hard copy)

Copy; External Auditors

Reply:

[Sent: 12 February 2025](#)

Dear Phil

Please see the Council's response.

Council has received a copy of the External Auditor's email (to Carrigan 6.11.24) stating that of your 6 challenges to the AGAR 23/24 that you have made, it will consider objection 2. The challenge to the AGAR 23/24 was reported to Finance & Policy Committee 9.8.24 and Full Council 9.9.24. The Council has not received direction from its External Auditor other than that the External Audit 23/24 cannot yet be concluded.

Council has responded to several public questions on its financial support of HCC, and these are on the Council's website:

28.2.22

9.5.22

22.2.23

13.3.23

14.8.23

8.1.24

11.3.24

The Council has taken advice from its solicitor (Wellers Hedleys) and also the Association of Local Councils, Devon ALC. The Council's Internal Auditor (IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd) has advised and is satisfied with the arrangements and Council actions.

The Council Grants financial support to HCC. Council has used specific Powers, in particular S19 (3) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. In addition, the Council has the GPC.

Decisions on Council financial contributions are made by Full Council. Councillors are not jointly and severally liable for Decisions of the Council; the Council has taken its solicitor's advice on this matter and the NALC Legal Topic Note 1 describes.

The Council's Decision to provide financial contributions are based on the Council's Accountant (Mulberry Associates) review of HCC's monthly accountant.

Financial contributions to HCC are governed by an Underwriting Agreement and are based on need for financial support (ie HCC has less than adequate Reserves). HCC is a company and registered Charity, not for profit, voluntary and with paid staff.

Regards

*Stephen Hill
Town Clerk
Honiton Town Council*



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Question:

Hello,

Today the staff of The Beehive have received an update on the lease negotiations from our Trustees. Whilst positive there is one area of major concern to myself.

As the Event & programming Manager I would like clarification on the following as it is now becoming restrictive to our operations.

Can I ask whether I can continue to issue contracts for upcoming events beyond September? I would like to keep the support we have from the acts that I have pencilled in from September to December and beyond into 2026. Agents are my main concern as they are now pressing me to confirm bookings. They will not continue to hold a date for much longer, and if another venue offers said date, they will go elsewhere. Time has running out.

Due to the way this industry works, events are booked a year in advance and go onto the box office as soon as possible once a contract has been signed. With the surrounding venues already advertising up to Christmas and into 2026, this leaves The Beehive in a vulnerable situation regarding ticket sales and puts us on the backfoot with the potential of large gaps in our programme at one of the busiest times of the year.

Is there potential for me to add a statement to the contract regarding the legalities of the ongoing lease renewal, to help us retain their faith in our ability to remain a thriving community venue.

Kind regards

Victoria Davis

Programme and Events Manager

Reply:

Sent: 13 February 2025 15:26

Subject: RE: Council Meeting, 10th Feb

Dear Victoria

Thank you for your question to Full Council on 10.2.25 (attached). The Council's response, given at the meeting was:

- That the Council has responded to this September 24 and responded to HCC (below);*
- Since then the Council and HCC have made progress with the award of a new Lease from September 2025; an Expression of Interest has been provided by HCC; Council approved the Tender and the Tender was issued; HCC returned the Tender; that returned Tender was Assessed by the Council; a Post Tender Negotiation meeting was convened for 30.1.25; there is an aim to conclude Post Tender Negotiations 14.2.25, approving Head of Terms 10.3.25; and then preparing a new Lease.*

Both HCC and HTC understand the impact on HCC's business and impact on HCC's staff and the Council aims to have a new Lease in place asap and before the September 2025 deadline. A new long Lease would provide the certainty needed.

"The Town Council has Decided on a closed Tender to HCC and is aiming to issue that Tender in anticipation of a Tender being received. Any Tender received would then be assessed and agreed by HTC (for a long[1]term lease with HCC). The lease would start from September 25 or earlier if agreed. If that is unsuccessful at any point, the Council has a contingency plan to operate the Beehive as a community centre."

Regards

Stephen Hill
Town Clerk
Honiton Town Council



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