

**Minutes of the Seaton Town Council ('the Council')  
Meeting  
on Monday, 5 June 2023**

**Present:**

**Chair:** Cllr. A. Singh

**Town**

**Councillors:** K. Beer, E. Bowman, K. Brooks P. Burrows, N. Dyke, D. Haggerty, M. Hartnell, D. Ledger, A. Mendham, J. Russell & C. Wood

**Officers:** Town Clerk & Facilities & Projects Officer

**Public:** No members of the public in attendance

**28. Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence, but Cllr. Mendham had advised the Town Clerk that she would arrive slightly late to the meeting. She arrived just after 6pm, during the County Councillors Report.

**29. Declarations of interest**

Cllrs. Hartnell, Haggerty & Ledger declared a personal interest as an East Devon District Councillors (EDDC) and Cllr Hartnell as a Devon County Councillor (DCC). Cllr. Hartnell declared a further personal interest, as his son volunteered at the Gateway Theatre Company. Cllrs. Dyke, Singh & Wood declared personal interests as they too volunteered at the Gateway Theatre Company.

**30. Minutes**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting of Seaton Town Council held on Monday, 15 May 2023. (proposed Cllr. Hartnell; seconded Cllr. Haggerty)

**31. Public Question Time**

There were no questions from members of the public.

**32. Chairman's Report**

Members noted the Chairman's report.

**33. County Councillor's Report**

Members noted Cllr. Hartnell's updates on the following:

- generally, some highways improvements were slowly being made to the most serious potholes.
- complaints had been received regarding the closure of Harepath Road, as traffic had initially been incorrectly diverted which had caused upset for

residents. This had subsequently been rectified and the diversion was scheduled to end on 7 June 2023, but may be extended.

- the Council had received £800 from Cllr Hartnell's Locality Budget, towards the Seaton Summer Celebration. Cllr Hartnell thanks the councillors and officers who had volunteered and worked hard to make the event a success.
- the resurfacing of Fore Street was scheduled for October. Cllr. Hartnell had requested that this work be brought forward but had been advised that this would not be possible unless it deteriorated further in the meantime.
- DCC's finances were still fragile but it had managed to bring in a balanced budget, with a small amount left at the end of the financial year 2022-23.
- there had been a lengthy traffic regulation order (TRO) in place, relating to the public highway adjacent to the Moridunum to enable the developer to lift materials by crane over the top of the Moridunum structure.
- the Moridunum was now being marketed by EDDC but had been incorrectly marketed as available for office use, rather than restaurant use. Officers had been notified and Cllr. Hartnell hoped this would be rectified imminently.
- the issue of motorhome parking on the seafront was discussed. DCC had set up a task group to look at this, and a report was considered by the Scrutiny Committee in March 2023, where it was decided that motorhome parking would be considered on a town by town basis, as it tended to be a bigger problem in coastal towns.

Various matters had to be considered when deciding what the best solution would be. These included, the legal classification of vehicles, recognised disposal points for waste which would have to be in EDDC-owned car parks, whether the same rules would apply to those eligible to free disabled parking and, finally, the issue of residents who currently parked their own motorhomes on the seafront over the winter.

#### **34. District Councillors' Reports**

The newly elected and re-elected district councillors had little to report as most of their time had been taken up attending various training courses, in all aspects of the Council's work, since they had taken up office. This had been helpful as many new councillors had been elected. Members noted the position.

#### **35. Town Clerk's Report**

Members noted the Town Clerk's report.

#### **36. Beer Men's Shed**

Members **RESOLVED** to make a donation of £100 from the community grant budget to the Beer Men's Shed in recognition of their work to revarnish the bench in the town square and noted their thanks to the members of the Men's Shed for carrying out this work. (proposed Cllr. Beer; seconded Cllr. Singh)

#### **37. Update on Tourist Information Centre**

Members noted the level of enquiries at the tourist information centre. Furthermore, they were advised that a request for a TIC Volunteer Co-ordinator to manage volunteers, to open at weekends, had been published on social media with no response. However, Cllrs. Dyke & Bowman agreed that they would take up the role and attend a meeting with the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk to discuss what was required in terms of training, volunteer protocols and all other necessary information. Ideally, they would like to open the TIC for 2 x 2-hour slots on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays, if sufficient volunteers could be recruited. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllrs Dyke & Bowman would take on this role under the guidance of officers and all action should be in accordance with the Council's Volunteer Policy and TIC risk assessment, once updated. (proposed Cllr. Wood; seconded Cllr. Burrows)

### **38. Outside Bodies**

Cllr. Mendham was appointed as representative to the EDDC Arts & Culture Forum (proposed Cllr. Singh; seconded Cllr. Haggerty) and Cllr Singh was appointed as a substitute (proposed Cllr. Haggerty; seconded Cllr. Beer)

### **39. Civility & Respect Pledge**

Members **RESOLVED** to sign the Civility & Respect Pledge and adopt the associated draft Dignity at Work Policy. (proposed Cllr. Ledger; seconded Cllr. Haggerty)

### **40. Community Engagement Strategy**

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the draft Community Engagement Strategy, in line with the requirements of the Local Council Awards Scheme. Additionally, the Town Clerk was tasked to make the necessary arrangements for councillor surgeries to be held on Thury Harcourt from 10am to 12am on Saturday, 1 July, 5 August 7 2 September 2023 (proposed Cllr. Haggerty; seconded Cllr. Bowman)

### **41. Moridunum Wall**

Members considered whether an approach be made to East Devon District Council requesting consent to paint the wall of the Moridunum, as a temporary improvement, pending sale by EDDC. Members decided that, as the building was being marketed for sale, and would possibly be demolished, it would not be a good use of the Council's funds to repaint the wall at the current time, even though it would improve it temporarily. However, they **RESOLVED** to write to East Devon District Council to ask whether they would consider painting the Moridunum to improve its aesthetically which could have the added benefit of assisting to market it. (proposed Cllr. Russell; seconded Cllr. Burrows)

### **42. Play Park Inspection Reports**

Members noted the play park inspections.

### **Confidential Items**

The Chairman moved, seconded by Cllr. Haggerty that, in accordance with the Council's Standing Order 1(d), press and public be excluded from the meeting during

the discussion of the following items, due to potentially commercially sensitive information being discussed.

#### **43. Update on Town Hall**

Members considered a written report by Cllr Wood after her attendance, as the Council's representative, at a recent meeting of the trustees of the Gateway Theatre Company ('GTC'), including questions raised by the trustees. Various questions arose from the report and more information was sought from Cllr Wood. Members also considered the response received from the Theatre Manager. In debate, the following points were discussed:

- the reason that a 30-year lease at a nominal rent was offered to GTC in 2016, was to enable GTC to take ownership of the building and enable them to seek grant funding to improve it as, in many cases, funding could be accessed by charities and community organisations that was not available to local authorities. This and the significant benefit already provided to GTC by the Council (nominal rent and 50% contribution towards maintenance costs), over and above other community groups in the town, should be the basis for future discussions. The point was also made that it was not uncommon, in the current financial climate, for grant funders to require match funding from applicants for any given project so this may be a relevant factor in whether certain grants could be applied for by GTC.
- members were pleased to note that the 2022-23 accounts were with GTC's accountants and would be available shortly.
- details of the 3 grants that had been applied for by GTC were not available, so it was not known whether, if successful, these funds would be restricted in terms of how they could be spent.
- complete records of all GTC's health & safety checks were still awaited, albeit verbal confirmation had been given at the trustees' meeting that GTC was compliant on all aspects.
- the amount held by the Council in an earmarked reserve, for the replacement of the heating at the town hall, currently stood at £34,756. However, it was noted that this had been set aside when the cost of the heating was anticipated to be much higher than the final quotations. As such, it was likely that, whilst some of the additional funds would be used to carry out other maintenance works at the town hall, such as the clock tower repairs, some of the balance may be moved to other EMRs or projects, as was the usual pattern, when the Council carried out its quarterly budgetary reviews.
- the Council noted that it also currently sets aside an annual budget of £8,000 towards general maintenance at the town hall
- in light of the Council's duty to prudently manage its own budgets, and its duty to the public purse, Members concluded that, without more detailed information, the Council could not properly assess the risk and consider whether further assistance might even be given. The Council agreed that they

should proceed in a cautious manner, until further financial information was available, and would not be able to enter into discussions regarding a 5-year maintenance plan until the most recent accounts were available.

Members **RESOLVED** to:

- note the comments in the Gateway's email dated 2 June 2023, responding to the resolution of the Council of 15 May 2023; and
- request a copy of the 2022-23 accounts as soon as they are available and further dialogue could then be entered into regarding the possibility of a 5-year maintenance plan between GTC and the Council, as to future repairs.

(proposed Cllr. Hartnell; seconded Cllr. Burrows)

Meeting closed at 7.24pm

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Dated 31/7/23 \_\_\_\_\_



