

**Minutes of the Seaton Town Council ('the Council')  
Meeting  
on Monday, 3 February 2025**

**Present:**

**Chair:** Cllr. A. Singh

**Town**

**Councillors:** K. Beer, E. Bowman, J. Oldfield, J. Rowland, J. Russell, P. Burrows,  
D.Ledger (arrived 18.10)

**Officers:** Deputy Clerk

**Public:** Approximately 140 members of the public were in attendance to regarding the closure of the Gateway Theatre Charity. After public question time, one member of the public was present for the rest of the public agenda items.

**133. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received, and reasons accepted, from Cllrs Hartnell & Haggerty. Cllrs Wood & Dyke were recorded as absent.

**134. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were declared.

**135. Council Minutes**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Seaton Town Council held on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025. (proposed Cllr.Rowland, seconded Cllr. Beer)

**136. District Councillors' Reports**

No district councillors reports provided.

**137. Public Question Time**

Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to grant sufficient time for 10 members of the public to speak on the matter of the closure of the Gateway Theatre Charity. (proposed Cllr Bowman, seconded Cllr Rowland).

The following points were raised:

- What aspirations does the Council have for this venue if the Gateway Theatre is disbanded? What are the timescales? What role can Seaton Chamber do to assist?
- The Gateway Theatre is a wonderful community venue delivering groups such as tea and chat, yoga and dance fit. What will happen if it closes?
- The Gateway Theatre is not simply a venue where activities take place, it works for the morale of the whole town, where people can make friendships. If this asset goes then there will be an impact on medical and mental health. The Gateway Theatre must be saved from closure. If the Council fails to save it then some councillors may not get the public vote at the next election.
- Please could the logic behind the decision be explained. Everything appears to be secretive. How would the decisions that have been taken improve life for Seaton? It is understood that the Council has a difficult job to do but should be working collaboratively with the Gateway Theatre and it does not feel that is happening.
- The Gateway Theatre is not a theatre but the beating heart of the town. How much money has been spent doing this up?
- The Council must enable the venue to continue. The Council must be fully transparent in its rationale to not give funds to the Gateway Theatre to enable it to continue. The Council has the power to increase its council tax precept to enable it to provide support to the theatre. The closure of the theatre would make the whole town culturally poorer.
- There has been no transparency from the Gateway Theatre or the Council. Has the insurance problem been resolved or is this a way to get rid of the Gateway Theatre by the back door? What does it mean when the Council says expenditure on stage rigging been delayed until the future of the Town Hall is decided? Would like to see more detail.
- Many people are attending the meeting this evening for the first time because of concern for the Gateway Theatre crisis. Can the Council please act.
- The Gateway Theatre is in the centre of Seaton, it is where people go to meet other human beings. It is the heart of Seaton.
- The budget for 2025 has presumably been set and everything is important to the town. If funding is given to the Gateway Theatre what would have to go instead?

- The Gateway Theatre helps to combat loneliness and caters for the elderly and very welcoming to my son who has a learning disability. There needs to be truth, clarity and funding.
- Emails voicing concern about the Gateway Theatre have not yet been responded to.
- On what grounds did the Council refuse the Gateway Theatre's funding application?
- The Gateway Theatre intend to hold a public meeting very soon. It is keen to fundraise to be able to pay some of the costs incurred. The Council is not to blame and has worked hard to get the building into an insurable state. The Gateway Theatre had not submitted a sufficiently robust business plan to support their funding application and the Council can only do what it can do within its procedures.

Cllr Beer confirmed that the Council had not taken the decision to close the Gateway Theatre. Cllr Ledger explained the budget allocated for 2025/26 to support the costs associated with the Town Hall. The Deputy Clerk delivered an explanation of the reasons for the closure of the building, detailing the issues pertaining to the withdrawal of insurance, remedial works required to address urgent health and safety issues and confirmed that the decision was taken in the interests of public safety. She outlined the works that had already been completed and confirmed the works that are ongoing and are scheduled to take place. Cllr Rowland reiterated that the decision had not been taken lightly but was one that the Council had no choice but to make.

Members **RESOLVED** to delegate authority to the Deputy Clerk to issue a statement addressing all comments raised at this evening's meeting (proposed Cllr Singh, seconded Cllr Ledger)

### 138. Committee Minutes

Members noted the minutes of the following meetings of the Council's committees:

- **Planning Committee** – 18 November & 2 and 16 December 2024
- **Finance & General Purposes Committee** – 18 November 2024

### 139. Chairman's Report

Members noted the report.

### 140. Town Clerk's Report

Members noted the report and correspondence log

#### **141. Update on Seaton Tourist Information Centre**

Members noted the update on enquiries to the tourist information centre. Members noted that Cllr Bowman has requested that the tourist information centre be opened on the weekend of The Grizzly 2025 and for weekend opening to resume this year for the summer season.

#### **142. Committee Membership**

Noone was appointed to fill the vacancy on the Planning Committee, following the resignation of Cllr. Bowman from said committee, so this would appear as a standing item on future agendas until a councillor was able to fill the vacancy.

#### **143. Interim Report of Internal Auditor**

Members noted the report.

#### **144. Review effectiveness of internal controls**

Members resolved to adopt the updated statement of internal controls and review its effectiveness (proposed Cllr Singh; seconded Cllr Ledger)

#### **145. Seaton Hospital – Cllr Rowland**

Members noted the update regarding Seaton Hospital from Cllr Rowland in his capacity as Chair of the Seaton Hospital Steering Group. The update covered the following key points:

- An overview of why Seaton Hospital Steering Group was established.
- Challenges faced to date due to purdah associated with this year's general election, the impact of the new Labour government's revised budget, and a non-committal response from NHS Property Services to the proposed business plan.
- The group's unsuccessful application to the Community Ownership Fund, which would have facilitated ensuring the wing was in a fit state for use and covered the first year's operating costs.
- Concerns regarding how the business plan will align with the social prescribing policy, which is scheduled for announcement on 25th February.

Members congratulated Cllr Rowland for his hard work to date.

#### **146. Events Report**

Members considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- delegate to the Town Clerk the authority to take such action and allocate such expenditure, within a budget of £500, as she considers necessary to deliver the proposed commemorative activities for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day and to make such adjustments to the schedule as become necessary

- delegate to the Town Clerk, the authority to allocate officer time as she considers necessary to support the delivery of a children's event by CTIS

(proposed by Cllr Beer; seconded by Cllr Singh)

#### **147. East Devon Soul Festival 2026 & Rural Music Project**

Members received a verbal report from the Deputy Clerk regarding a proposed East Devon Soul Festival event in 2026 and **RESOLVED** to:

- authorise the Town Clerk to submit a statement in support of a funding application to the Arts and Humanities Research Council by The Rural Music Project

(Proposed by Cllr Rowland; seconded by Cllr Singh)

#### **148. Locality Grant**

Members considered the locality budget expenditure report and **RESOLVED** to use the grant to:

- purchase of five benches, as detailed in the report
- purchase of two notice boards, as detailed in the report

(proposed Cllr Singh, seconded Cllr Bowman)

#### **149. Community Grants**

Members considered and **RESOLVED** to approve the following applications for community grants:

- Sustainable Project Live – £1,000 - (proposed Cllr.Ledger seconded Cllr. Bowman)
- Project Food - £432 - (proposed Cllr. Burrows; seconded Cllr. Ledger)

#### **150. Devon Association of Local Councils – Cllr Beer**

Members noted the verbal updated from Cllr Beer following his recent attendance at a DALC meeting. Cllr Ledger advised that Members should start giving consideration to the direction of the Council now to ensure sufficient allocation of resources following a decision on devolution.

#### **151. Playpark inspection reports**

Members noted the play park inspection reports.

**The meeting closed at 7.22pm**