

**Minutes of the Seaton Town Council ('the Council')
Annual Council Meeting
on Monday, 7 July 2025**

Present:

Chair: Cllr. A. Singh

Town

Councillors: E. Bowman, P. Burrows, D. Haggerty, M. Hartnell, K. Pike, J. Rowland
& C. Wood

Officers: Town Clerk

Public: Four members of the public were in attendance.

41. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Beer & Dyke and the reasons accepted. Cllr Russell's resignation as a councillor was also noted. Cllr Arnott, as DCC Councillor also submitted apologies.

42. Declarations of Interest

Cllrs. Hartnell & Haggerty declared a personal interest as East Devon District Councillors (EDDC). Cllr. Bowman declared a personal interest as a volunteer at the Gateway Theatre Company, and Cllr. Wood declared an interest as a trustee on the Gateway Theatre Company; Cllr. Hartnell declared a personal interest, as his son was a volunteer at the Gateway Theatre Company.

43. Minutes

Subject to the inclusion of an amendment raised by Cllr Rowland with regard to the council's priorities, Members **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of a meeting of Seaton Town Council held on Monday 9 June. (proposed Cllr. Singh; seconded Cllr. Haggerty)

44. Committee Minutes

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

- **Planning Committee** – 9 June 2025

45. County Councillor's Report

Members noted the county councillor's apologies and **RESOLVED** to ask Cllr Arnott if he was able to provide a written report for future meetings. (proposed Cllr. Burrows; seconded Cllr. Bowman)

46. District Councillors' Reports

Cllrs. Hartnell and Haggerty gave verbal reports, highlighting the following:

- Cllr Haggerty had been dealing with two safeguarding situations and also reported that 'Coach Friendly' was ongoing
- Cllr Hartnell confirmed that he had pursued a meeting with Cllrs Arnott & Jung about concerns over the scruffiness of the town. A meeting had now been arranged with Cllr Arnott, ward members and Streetscene on 17 July 2025. Cllr Hartnell confirmed that Streetscene acknowledged the problem but had capacity difficulties, due to long term sickness of members of the team.
- the sale of the Moridunum was ongoing, despite the news that the Fosseyway Transition Company had gone into administration, and the transaction was currently being dealt with EDDC's legal officers
- concern was raised regarding the lack of positive action with regard to the industrial units at Colyford Road for many years. Cllr Hartnell confirmed that these had formed part of the unsuccessful levelling up bid and that a lack of resources was the biggest challenge for EDDC. However, he would raise the issue with Tim Childs at EDDC.
- Many queries had been received regarding the council tax premium on second homes which had been in effect since April. More information was available on EDDC's website. Other queries had been raised with regard to the opening date for the new toilets on West Walk and the Harepath Road planning application.

Members noted the reports.

47. Public Question Time

One member of the public raised serious concerns regarding the ongoing problem of inconsiderate and, on occasions, dangerous driving on Royal Observe Way and gave examples of incidences that she and others had witnessed and made a plea for speed bumps to be installed. She also stated that the vehicles delivering to Tesco were arriving earlier than the times permitted in the planning conditions attaching to the planning permission for the Tesco site.

Members, whilst sympathetic, advised that the matters raised with regard to speed bumps and dangerous driving were primarily for DCC and the Police. Unfortunately, it was generally the policy not to install speed bumps due to the difficulties caused to emergency vehicles such as ambulances. Breaches of planning conditions were for EDDC, as the local planning authority, to investigate and take actions as appropriate.

However, Members **RESOLVED** that the Council would:

- write to the Police requesting that they target the area
- write to the enforcement team at EDDC regarding the breach of planning conditions by delivery drivers

(proposed Cllr. Hartnell; seconded Cllr. Haggerty)

48. Update on Gateway Theatre Company

Members received an update from the Chair of the Gateway Theatre Company, in particular with regard to finance, H&S and a culture change within the organisation including:

- much closer operational oversight by the trustees
- new more robust financial reporting procedures introduced
- regular income and expenditure reports would be provided to the Council, once the trustees were satisfied that the new processes were providing accurate and meaningful figures
- the trustees had identified the primary risks as H&S, finance and scheduling
- trustee working groups had been established to focus on different elements of GTC's responsibilities including H&S, event planning and strengthening community ties
- improved commercial awareness
- there had been step changes in staff supervision with:
 - targets and key performance indicators set
 - monthly reporting to trustees introduced
 - regular appraisals
 - difficult and frank discussions had taken place with staff
 - trustees expected discipline to be applied by staff to scheduling in order to optimise the financial performance of GTC
 - this level of trustee intervention would continue until satisfied that the new culture was properly embedded into the organisation
- whilst acknowledging there were still many challenges, the Chair also reported the following positive actions:
 - improved communication with the Council
 - two training events had been undertaken and included trustees, staff and volunteers
 - pre-performance checks were carried out prior to every event leading to a successful evacuation, when the fire alarm had gone off during a recent performance
 - preliminary work already being undertaken to ensure readiness for Martyn's Law
 - forward planning was improving
 - community based work continuing, an example being an appropriate agreement being drawn up with Seaton & District Music Society regarding the storage of their piano
 - the Chair was satisfied that the board of trustees now had all the skills to manage the theatre effectively

Members noted the Chair's report and, whilst still cautious, thanked him for coming along and being open with the Council about the ongoing challenges and commending the work that was being undertaken to address these.

The Town Clerk then provided a summary to Members of outstanding issues at the town hall that officers were aware of:

- Fire alarm panel – there is an ongoing issue with the fire alarm panel in the building however its primary function remains intact, this has been confirmed in writing by the fire safety contractor. Members were reminded that the fire alarm panel, installed in February 2022, was the cheaper of the 3 options provided, in that it allowed for a panel that was compatible with existing fire safety hardware within the building. It is a basic model, as GTC specifically requested that it did not have a touch screen. There was a software glitch / firmware malfunction whilst routine inspection and servicing of the panel was being carried out by ASAP. This means that the building cannot be divided into zones and is currently programmed to a single zone. Ben Waring will complete a licensed engineer refresher course with Eaton (the fire alarm manufacturer), in order to obtain the latest software updates with a view to reloading the software and reprogramming the system. The timeframe for this is approximately 5 weeks – early August for completion - however this is only an interim solution, and the fire safety hardware in the building needs to be future proofed.
- The smoke detectors have been tested throughout the building and some are coming to the end of their life and will require replacement. The detectors are Menvier; one of the most expensive products with limited compatibility with fire alarm systems. Ben Waring is liaising with the ASAP engineers to produce a replacement schedule.
- Ben Waring has recommended that this is an opportunity to future proof the fire alarm system within the building by replacing detectors with a more cost-effective option which allows for compatibility with other fire alarm systems with a view to replacing the fire alarm panel and other fire safety hardware. Ben will provide options, costs and timeframes in order to allow both the Council and GTC to budget and plan for the works. Officers continue to work with Ben to obtain a cost-effective, long-term solution and a further report will be brought to Members in due course.
- Auditorium doors – there is an ongoing issue with the automatic closure and fire safety strip on the auditorium doors. The doors currently close very quickly and slam which means that the strip is coming away. Ben Waring is liaising with another company to investigate whether the closing mechanism can be adjusted to slow down the closing of the doors to prevent this from happening. Officers continue to work with Ben to resolve this issue.
- Officers met with John Whitehouse, the GTC trustee with responsibility for health and safety. It was agreed that STC would continue to deal with any issues observed by GTC regarding the fire alarm panel and smoke detectors (whilst these works are ongoing), emergency lighting (to be reviewed in February once the guarantee expires) and issues associated with the fire door works that have been completed. These will be flagged by GTC in an email if it is urgent or logged as an observation on the monthly check sheets if it is minor. These records will be checked by trustees prior to being sent to STC at the end of each month.

- The Deputy Clerk will draft a policy to formalise the health and safety checks of shared areas within the building. It is understood that the Museum is checking the emergency lighting, fire doors and signage in the Museum's main entrance which also serves as a shared fire escape for the theatre and both parties undertake a weekly fire alarm check every Tuesday. This policy will remain in place until such time as new leases are drafted and agreed.
- A fire safety audit was undertaken on 4 June, a copy of which has been received by officers. The review involved an inspection of the works carried out within the building and of the paperwork collated by STC officers to certify the works that have taken place and to evidence that processes have been implemented in line with recommendations made in previous fire risk assessments. Amendments have been requested to the wording within the report but, in summary, it was noted that a high standard of diligence and commitment of fire safety management was demonstrated during the period that the Council took control of the building and the systems that have been put in place indicate a proactive attitude and a commendable approach.

Members noted the update from officers.

49. Chairman's Report

The Chairman had no engagements to report since the last meeting.

50. Town Clerk's Report

Members noted the report and correspondence log. Additionally:

- the Town Clerk confirmed that a claim had been made, in respect of the cyber security breach and agreed by the insurers. There was an excess payable of £1,500.
- Cllr. Rowland updated the Council regarding his discussion with the Leader of EDDC regarding the decision not to take action, under s215 of the Town & Country Planning Act, with regard to the poor state of 'The Look Out', who had agreed that a meeting should be arranged with officers and councillors from EDDC and the town council

Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to forward the following item, as a member of public was in attendance in support. (proposed Cllr. Rowland; seconded Cllr. Hartnell)

51. Community Grants

Members considered the resubmitted application for a community grant from Seaton Chamber and **RESOLVED** approve a grant of £1,000. Members also indicated that they hoped that Seaton Chamber would make the PA system available to other community groups in the town. (proposed Cllr. Wood; seconded Cllr. Burrows)

52. Update on Seaton Tourist Information Centre

Members noted the update on enquiries to the tourist information centre.

53. Update on the Council's Priorities & Town Plan

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

- note the known challenges and work streams, as set out in this report, and incorporate these in an updated plan
- hold an informal meeting to consider future priorities, enabling officers to research the viability thereof, and bring forward an updated plan to Council to include the proposals that could be taken forward. The meeting would take place on the evening of 21 July 2025 after the meetings of the Planning & F&GP Committees. It was not a formally constituted public meeting, but an informal forum for councillors.

(proposed Cllr. Hartnell; seconded Cllr. Wood)

54. Councillor Surgeries

Members considered the proposals for the organisation of councillor surgeries in municipal year 2025-26 and **RESOLVED** to:

- authorise the Town Clerk & officers to make the necessary arrangements for the delivery of 4 councillor surgeries as detailed in this report
- authorise the Town Clerk and officers to research an alternative format for the annual town meeting 2026 and to bring an updated report to Members in the autumn

(proposed Cllr. Rowland; seconded Cllr. Hartnell)

55. COSHH Policy

Members considered the report and **RESOLVED** to and approve the COSHH Policy (proposed Cllr. Hartnell; seconded Cllr. Haggerty)

56. Legionella Risk Report

Members considered the report and the results of the updated legionella risk assessment:

- agree to the quotation to undertake the urgent essential works at Marshlands in the sum of £1,593.39 + VAT
- agree to a specialist company managing the compliance on an annual basis
- to authorise the Town Clerk to engage appropriate professional support to ensure ongoing compliance on an annual basis

(proposed Cllr. Singh; seconded Cllr. Haggerty)

57. Play Park Inspections

Members noted the inspection reports

The meeting closed at 7.12pm.

Signed: _____

Dated: 1/9/25 _____