

**Minutes of the Seaton Town Council ('the Council')  
Annual Council Meeting  
on Monday, 9 June 2025**

**Present:**

**Chair:** Cllr. A. Singh

**Town**

**Councillors:** K. Beer, E. Bowman, P. Burrows, N. Dyke, D. Haggerty, M. Hartnell, J. Rowland, J. Russell & C. Wood. New councillor, Kathryn Pike, joined the meeting after she was co-opted.

**Officers:** Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk

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

**18. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Ledger and the reasons accepted.

**19. Declarations of Interest**

Cllrs. Hartnell & Haggerty declared a personal interest as East Devon District Councillors (EDDC). Cllrs. Bowman & Dyke & Wood declared a personal interest as volunteers at the Gateway Theatre Company who occupied the town hall, 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 there. Cllrs. Haggerty, Hartnell & Singh declared interest in the application be Seaton Chamber for a community grant, as they were business owners in the town.

**20. Minutes**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of a meeting of Seaton Town Council held on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025. (proposed Cllr. Dyke; seconded Cllr. Bowman)

**21. Co-option**

Having heard presentations from the two candidates for co-option, prior to the public meeting, Members **RESOLVED** to co-opt Kathryn Pike to Seaton Town Council.

Cllr. Pike signed the Declaration of Office and took up his position as a councillor immediately (proposed Cllr. Singh; seconded Cllr. Hartnell)

**22. County Councillor's Report**

No report was submitted by Cllr. Arnott. NOTE – it became apparent after the meeting that Cllr Arnott had attended at Marshlands but had been unable to access

the meeting, as had not realised that it was taking place in the new Council Chamber on the first floor of the building. He asked retrospectively that his apologies be noted.

### **23. District Councillors' Reports**

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

- concerns over the scruffiness of the town had been raised with Streetscene by Cllr Hartnell, who had written to Cllr. Jung, copying in Cllrs. Arnott and Hayward and requested a walk about meeting in the town to discuss this and other matters including the public toilets and Moridunum. Cllr Hartnell would follow it up again and was hoping the walkabout would involve ward members with Streetscene, to include the Head of Service responsible for Streetscene
- the Marsh Road toilets site had now been sold
- the sale of the Moridunum had also been agreed and the transaction was currently being dealt with EDDC's legal officers
- funding had been agreed for the cliff management works at Seaton Hole so that the timetable for the works is not delayed
- Cllr Haggerty confirmed that now that 'Coach Friendly' status had been achieved, he would be working with local businesses who had to open and be available to coach visitors, if the town was to gain maximum benefit from the Coach Friendly accreditation

Members noted the reports.

### **24. Public Question Time**

No members of the public were in attendance.

### **25. Committee Minutes**

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

- **Planning Committee** – 28 April & 12 May 2025

### **26. Chairman's Report**

The Chairman added that he had also attended the opening of the town's new shoe shop. Members noted the report.

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

Members noted the report and correspondence log. Cllr. Rowland expressed concern regarding EDDC's decision not to take action, under s215 of the Town & Country Planning Act, with regard to the poor state of 'The Look Out' on the seafront and proposed that a meeting be arranged with officers and the Leader of EDDC and Ward Members to discuss further. (proposed Cllr. Rowland; seconded Cllr. Hartnell)

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

Members noted the update on enquiries to the tourist information centre and Cllr. Bowman urged Members to encourage others to volunteer in the tourist information centre to enable it to continue to open at weekends.

**29. Appointment to an outside body**

Members **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr. Haggerty, as representative, and Cllr. Rowland, as substitute, to the East Devon Arts & Culture Forum. (proposed Cllr. Singh; seconded Cllr. Hartnell)

**30. Coast & Country Project**

Members considered the update provided by the Chairman and after some discussion, on balance, decided that the request for further funding of £5,000 towards the Coast & Country Project was not the best use of the Council's funds. Therefore, Members **RESOLVED** to refuse the request for further funding of £5,000 towards the Coast & Country Project. (proposed Cllr. Beer; seconded Cllr. Hartnell)

**31. Community Grants**

Members considered an application for a community grant from Seaton Chamber for £1,500 towards the Christmas lights event. Whilst Members were supportive in principle of approving a grant limited to £1,000, this was subject to the Chamber resubmitting the application to include more detail on how exactly the grant would be spent, as they felt that the current application was insufficiently clear. The resubmission should include clarity on the reference to some of the monies being spent on trees, as it had previously been the intention that these would be funded by businesses. Additionally, they requested evidence of how the event will be 'future-proofed' as community grants can only be awarded once in every two years and usually for capital items, so how will items purchased be stored and re-used at future events. Therefore, Members **RESOLVED** to defer the application to the next meeting and to write to the Chamber advising them of the discussions and seeking a detailed resubmission for a grant of up to £1,000 (proposed Cllr. Rowland; seconded Cllr. Beer)

**32. Report of Internal Auditor 2024/25**

Members received and **RESOLVED** to note the report and observations of the Internal Auditor. (proposed Cllr. Singh; seconded Cllr. Haggerty)

**33. Annual Governance Statement 2024/2025**

Members **RESOLVED** to agree and approve Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement. (proposed Cllr. Haggerty; seconded Cllr. Beer)

**34. Accounting Statements 2024/2025**

Members **RESOLVED** to:

- agree and approve Section 2 – Accounting Statements and explanation of significant variances.
- to minute the Council's thanks to the Town Clerk for her hard work in repopulating the Council's financial data, after the cyber security breach (proposed Cllr. Hartnell; seconded Cllr. Beer)

### **35. Exercise of Public Rights**

Members **RESOLVED** to agree the dates for the exercise of public rights. (proposed Cllr. Hartnell; seconded Cllr. Beer)

### **36. Asset Register**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the updated asset register, in line with the observations of the internal auditor. (proposed Cllr. Singh; seconded Cllr. Haggerty)

### **37. Purchase of access ramp**

Members acknowledged that the temporary situation of the beach matting at the Axmouth Harbour end of the Esplanade was not ideal. However, having sought the views of the Council's Disability Champion, who felt that the ramp would be of limited value as it would only be used for one season, and also considered the fact that the beach access project was a partnership project with EDDC, Members **RESOLVED** to fund up to 50% of the £850 + VAT cost towards the purchase of a ramp, to enable better access to the beach matting during summer 2025, if EDDC agreed to fund the balance. (proposed Cllr. Hartnell; seconded Cllr. Haggerty)

### **38. Play Park Inspections**

Members noted the inspection reports.

### **39. Local Government Reorganisation**

Members noted there were no updates on this standing agenda item.

### **40. Update on Town Hall**

Members received an update on the town hall, and officers outlined ongoing concerns regarding GTC's management of the H&S of the building and the continuing financial risk, and how this impacted the Council's risk register. Concerns were summarised as follows:

- Fire alarm testing and servicing records – copies were requested by officers. GTC had not retained copies, so had requested copies from the fire risk consultant and then GTC forwarded copies of records relating to Marshlands, not the town hall
- Collaborative working with the museum – the relationship of GTC with the AVHA is difficult and agreement needs to be in place regarding shared fire alarm testing, access to each other's area, testing of emergency lights in shared fire escape route and servicing of extinguisher in shared fire escape route.
- Officers met with the Risk Manager from Clear Councils who advised that:
  - HSE prosecutions were likely if proper attention were not given to safety
  - should a prosecution be successful, any fines imposed would not be recoverable under the Council's insurance policy
  - it was essential that the Council has an audit trail to defend its position, should that be required. He did not consider the safety checks

undertaken by GTC, since re-entering the building, would be adequate, should a claim arise

- it might be prudent for the Council to appoint someone to carry out regular checks, if not satisfied that these are being carried out to the appropriate standard by GTC, but this would come at a cost which would have to be charged back to GTC
- the Council may wish to develop an internal diary system to prompt GTC to undertake and submit evidence to the Council of all checks
- GTC risk assessments – require a great deal of work to be fit for purpose. Risk assessments are a major defence document in any claim. The Risk Manager advised that the ones produced by GTC were in adequate, for instance, the assessment of every risk was low. Martyn's Law should also be included in risk assessments.
- Fire alarm panel has faults – could potentially be a software glitch. Ben Waring is sourcing guidance on whether this is fixable but, potentially, a replacement panel will be required. Consideration needs to be given to cost.
- Finances – an indicative invoice had been sent to GTC, setting out the known costs that would become due on 31 March 2026. Currently, the amount due was £15,700 and further invoices were awaited, with regard to fire testing. There would also be costs relating to the fire panel. Additionally, the Council had spent £11,400 on repairs to the exterior of the town hall and had provided a 'benefit in kind' of some £54,000 in terms of council officer time over the last 8 months in bring the building back to an acceptable and safe standard.
- The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk would be meeting with the Chair of GTC to discuss the Council's concerns in the coming days and, in line with the Council's risk register, would be asking him to attend future council meetings to provide updates on finances and safety at the town hall.

Members noted the update.

The meeting closed at 8.29pm.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dated:** \_\_\_\_\_