

QUESTIONS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION – 27 JULY 2023

The questions have been listed in the order they were received.

FROM:	QUESTION
Written question from R Duffill	<p>“Considering the frequency of power outages in the town, then is the council able to do anything to investigate the reasons behind this? Is this a local distribution network problem that can be fixed by Northern Powergrid?”</p> <p>Answer: <i>The Clerk has approached Northern Powergrid to obtain more information; once the Council has a response from Northern Powergrid an answer will be provided.</i></p>
Written questions from R Duffill	<p>“After a powercut then residents get very little feedback - if any - as to the causes of an incident? Does Northern Powergrid have plans to improve its feedback systems to residents?”</p> <p>Answer: <i>The Clerk has approached Northern Powergrid to obtain more information; once the Council has a response from Northern Powergrid an answer will be provided.</i></p>
Written question from J Baron	<p>“The money set aside for mayor costs and picture restoration would pay for a years worth of training costs for hundreds of local children that use Holderness academy. Which, in the eyes of the council, offers the best value for money ????”</p> <p>Answer: <i>Firstly, it should be noted that a Town Council has few powers, unlike a Unitary Council such as East Riding of Yorkshire. The precept received by Hedon Town Council is to be used within the town of Hedon, at a community level, whilst East Riding of Yorkshire Council provides infrastructure and county wide services. Education is a county wide service, falling under the remit of East Riding of Yorkshire Council and not Hedon Town Council.</i> <i>Regarding the Mayor’s allowance, this is used by the Mayor of Hedon to continue the town’s historic civic traditions, such as Mayor Making, Penny throwing, and supporting Remembrance Day Service event with the Parade and refreshments. The allowance also supports the cost incurred by the Mayor when represent Hedon and Hedon Town Council at Civic events throughout the East Riding, Hull and beyond. Hedon and the people of Hedon are proud of the town’s heritage and without the precept that tradition could be at risk.</i> <i>The precept as a whole is also utilised by the Town Council to maintain property owned by the Town and this includes the collection of paintings housed in the Town Hall, as well as many other assets ranging from the Silver Collection, land, through to litter bins.</i></p>

<p>Written question from J Dervey</p>	<p>“Will HTC launch an investigation into who sent the hate mail to a Hedon resident as a result of her truthful report regarding the council meeting of 22nd June? If, it should be found that a member of the council sent this note, will they be removed for misconduct?”</p> <p>Answer: <i>Hedon Town Council would advise the recipient of any hate mail to contact the police as this is a matter beyond the scope the Town Council’s powers. If evidence suggests that any alleged hate mail was sent by a Councillor, Hedon Town Council would advise the recipient to contact the police or if they wished to raise a complaint against an individual Councillor, to direct the matter to the Monitoring Office at East Riding of Yorkshire Council.</i></p>
<p>Written questions from E Pittaway</p>	<p>“This question is aimed at Councillors Brindley & Rommell. I wonder why there are two food banks in a small town like Hedon. I work with the vicar in St Augustine’s foodbank and we are always asking for donations. It would seem to me to be better practice to have just one based in the church. The church is bigger and could therefore house more products, the residents would only have to visit one place, it would be far easier to keep an eye on stock levels and the Amy Black Centre could then be used as a community centre for the people of the town to enjoy. The AB centre could be used for children’s parties etc and could then provide revenue for the council in the form of rent. I would appreciate your thoughts on this.”</p> <p><i>Mrs Goldspink spoke on behalf of the PPC</i> <i>Miss Rommell spoke on behalf of the Amy Black Centre Food Bank</i></p> <p>Answer:</p> <p><i>The food bank at the Amy Black Centre is not operated by the Town Council. Mr Brindley and Miss Rommell as private individuals are responsible for this organisation operating this scheme, however, not in their role as Town Councillors. Matters related to the operation of the food bank need to be directed to Mr Brindley and Miss Rommell outside of the Council.</i> <i>The Council agreed a lease with the food bank for the use of the Amy Black Centre to house the food bank; the Council has no involvement in the organisation beyond this relationship.</i></p>
<p>Written question from J Dervey</p>	<p>“Will council members please explain to those present, how a person with no residential address or business address in Hedon, became elected to HTC? What suitable references and testimonial of particular skill or relevant work experience did the individual supply to support their application for the position?”</p> <p>Answer: <i>Hedon Town Council is not aware of any Member that is not either a resident of the town or who is employed or has a business interest within the town.</i></p>

	<p><i>Councillors are usually elected for a 4-year period of office. A person does not need to provide any references or testimonials, nor is there a requirement to possess particular skills or have relevant work experience to become a Councillor.</i></p> <p><i>Interested persons must be aged 18 years or over and:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>· Have lived in the Parish or within three miles of it for the preceding twelve months</i> <i>· Be a registered elector in the Parish: or</i> <i>· Have occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises in the Parish for the preceding twelve months: or</i> <i>· Have their principal or only place of work in the Parish for the preceding twelve months</i> <i>· Must not be disqualified from holding office as a Councillor</i> <p><i>As time is short if you would like to know where you can find more information please contact the Town Clerk who will be able to direct you to more information.</i></p>
Written question from J Dervey	<p>“In view of the furore caused by the Council’s (in my opinion, abhorrent) decision to not permit the flying of the Pride Flag (on 22nd June 2023), nor a Black Lives Matter flag, a Women’s Rights flag or similar, do Councillors agree that they should adjust their current policy for ensuring Equality and Inclusivity in their decision making processes and integrate it as a key part of the Councillors Code of Conduct? If so, when will they put this in place?”</p> <p><i>Answer:</i> <i>See collective answer below</i></p>
Written question from J Dervey	<p>“Have all councillors engaged with suitable training for their position and, specifically, have they all done recent Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training?”</p> <p><i>Answer:</i> <i>See collective answer below</i></p>
Written question from J Dervey	<p>“As Hedon residents and businesses have been very clear at their disappointment at the decision taken, would councillors be willing to review their decisions and hold a re-vote?”</p> <p><i>Answer:</i> <i>See collective answer below</i></p>
Written question from M Wheatley	<p>“Bearing in mind that the flying of a flag indicates the love, pride and belonging of its followers, does the council believe that the ideals and wishes of the population of Hedon were truly represented by the vote not to fly the Pride Flag during Pride month unlike some neighbouring towns and the City of Hull?”</p> <p><i>Answer:</i> <i>See collective answer below</i></p>

Written question from A Hose	<p>"In light of the TV, social media, and public opinions do councillors regret the decision they made to not fly the flag in future years. Has there been a change of heart at all now that they know what the residents of Hedon would like to see? If so, can there be a re vote sooner than the normal 6 months wait?"</p> <p>Answer: See collective answer below</p>
Written question from A Hose	<p>"In most government workplaces, employees/ volunteers have to take a diversity and inclusivity course of some kind. I believe East Riding have a course that I think all councillors should attend as mandatory to serve the public.</p> <p>see link https://ols.eastriding.gov.uk/wcfwebsite/eryc/course.aspx?id=767000053840678 Do councillors have to take any such courses like diversity and inclusivity, safeguarding, social media etiquette, (especially and at least DBS checks) etc. If not why not?"!</p> <p>Councillor Birch said: "If we want to make the East Riding one of the best places to live and work, we need to embrace equality, diversity and inclusion so everyone feels like they matter and are included".</p> <p>Answer: See collective answer below</p>
Written question from J Baron	<p>"When will councillors Thompson, Storr, Goldspink, Rommell & Brindley apologise to all those offended by their views regarding the local LGBT+ community and do they plan on a. Resigning or b. Stopping bringing the council into disrepute and making this area a laughing stock."</p> <p>Answer: See collective answer below</p>
Written questions from W Branton	<p>"I wish to put a question to Hedon Town Council as to why, after a majority vote against flying the pride flag from the town hall some councillors thought it fitting to approach The Hull Daily Mail, BBC Look North, ITV Calendar and Holderness Gazette complaining bitterly about the vote regarding the pride flag. What do they not understand about democracy? As one of the electorate I would like to put it to them that they should resign because of their undemocratic action(s). They should not be in office. Perhaps they should consider living in a dictatorship where their undemocratic views would, perhaps, be appreciated."</p> <p>Answer: See collective answer below</p>
<p>Any question that does not receive an answer due to time pressures would be put on the relevant agenda for the next council committee meeting</p>	

ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE PRIDE FLAG

INTRODUCTION

In view of the limited time, and the number of questions submitted for this session of Public Participation, questions relating to the Council's decision regarding the Pride flag will be dealt with collectively.

To clarify, the Public Participation sessions are to raise a question with the Council, answers given will be on behalf of the Council and not individual Councillors.

CODE OF CONDUCT & EQUALITY POLICY

Hedon Town Council adopted East Riding of Yorkshire's Code of Conduct, and as Members of Hedon Town Council are expected to follow. Hedon Town Council also has an Equality Policy, and as Members they are expected to follow.

Both the Code of Conduct and the Equality Policy can be found on the Council's website.

If anyone believes that an individual Councillor(s) has breached the Code of Conduct and decided to pursue a complaint they would need to take the matter to the Monitoring Officer at East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

COUNCILLOR TRAINING

Councillors attend training voluntarily, there is no mandatory training that a Councillor is obliged to undertake. The local council association offers varied and frequently training sessions, in particular "Being a Good Councillor" training.

Councillors are made aware of relevant training opportunities as they arise and provision is made in the Council budget for staff and Councillor training. Training decisions are made by Council/Councillors to fit the demands of their individual role(s) within the Council.

RE-VISITING THE DECISION

Hedon Town Council's Standing Orders (rules of the council) preclude the Council from re-visiting a decision within 6 months. Council may choose to consider the matter a later if they so wish.

As we are now at the end of Pride Month there is no urgency to revisit the decision within the 6-month period of the original decision.

The decision is made and if Council decide at a later date to take another look at flying a Pride flag this will be through fresh eyes, an evaluation of the facts at the time and without a preconceived outcome.

REFLECTING THE VIEWS OF THE RESIDENTS

The role of Councillors is to represent the town of Hedon and represent the views of the electorate they service.

At the meeting of 22 June Councillors participated in a robust discussion about flying a Pride flag from the Town Hall flag pole, followed by a democratic vote by a show of hands 5:4 in favour of not flying the Pride flag from the flag pole.

The Council's decision was formed by a democratic vote, whereby the majority carries the motion. Although the decision was decided by a single vote majority, the Council's decision was made. The Councillors, who represent the people of the town, had demonstrated by their vote, how they believed the resident of Hedon felt about the Pride flag.

APOLOGIES OR RESIGNATIONS

It should be noted that Councillors are elected representatives and not employees.

A Councillor's decision to resign from Council is a personal one. A question asked about Councillor apologies; any such decision would be a personal decision on the part of the individual Councillor.

PRESS AND PUBLICITY

As you may be aware, Hedon has been the subject of press and media interest. It has been alleged that this was initiated by Councillors. However, the press had approached the Council Office asking for a statement following the June meeting; to which the Mayor gave the press a statement, as did Cllr Gallant and the Council office circulated the Council's statement on the situation to other outlets as they too made approaches.

As the reports of the decisions made at the meeting of the 22nd were swiftly reported on social media, there were many possible sources through which media outlets had opportunity to find the story.

The Council would like to point out that whilst a decision not to support Pride by flying a flag was made, it recognises that this decision may disappoint those in the LGBTQIA+ community and Cllr Gallant acknowledged this during his interaction with the media. There is no room for a one size fits all solution in the LGBTQIA+ debate, this issue is about diversity, equality, inclusivity; but most of all about the right for an individual to choose. There is no place for a LGBTQIA+ community in a dictatorship, but there should be in Hedon.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

- A members of the public responded; that it was right to talk to the press, however, as this was a controversial decision perhaps the Council should have considered gauging public opinion before making a decision. Cllr Hinch did point out that the timeframe was short and it would be difficult to canvas the 8,000 residents.
- Another member of the public commented that this issue of flag flying had become hung up on the Pride flag and not consider other groups or campaigns that would ask to use the town hall flagpole, which in their opinion should only be used for civic events/flags. Cllr Goldspink supported this comment and continue to comment that it was a good idea for posters to be displayed, but it was not true that the councillors who voted again flying the Pride flag were homophobic.
- Cllr Gallant spoke about the decision to fly the Ukraine flag and he did not expect the reaction it had received.
- A further member of the public noted that the whole situation had reflected badly on the town.