

THORVERTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of Thorverton Parish Council held at the Memorial Hall, Silver St, Thorverton on Tuesday 14th April 2026 at 7:30pm.

PRESENT

Cllr Andy Price (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Stuart Crang
Cllr Andrew Foster
Cllr John Hodge
Cllr Graham Sims
Cllr Bryanna Uglow

ABSENT

Cllr Karl Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE:

3 members of the public, D/Cllr Rhys Roberts,
C/Cllr Steve Keable, Jim Roberts (Clerk and RFO)

1 Chair Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone, thanking them for coming. He thanked the working group for their prompt effort on the Housing Survey.

2 Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Hodges, and Uglow are members of Thorverton Community Land Trust. Cllr Uglow is the Council's nominated member of the Thorverton Memorial Hall. Cllr Foster is Chair of the Thorverton Community Land Trust

3 Apologies

Cllr Wilson sent apologies as he is returning from overseas.

4 Public Open Session

No items raised.

5 Minutes

Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meetings held on 10th & 16th March 2026 and the Chair duly signed them. **Prop** Cllr Foster **Sec** Cllr Crang

6 External Reports To receive reports from:

6.1 County Councillor Steve Keable

C/Cllr Keable reported:

He had circulated his written report, see appendix A.

Internationally the last 2 months have been rather dire but good stuff happening locally. There have been rail improvements for the Tarka Line to North Devon, and the new station at Cullompton has been approved. Improvements to the M5 Junction 28 has been shortlisted for funding which will include £3m for the sports hub in the garden village including relocating the cricket club. Tenders have come in for the Cullompton Relief Road. New electric buses will now venture into rural areas. The new housing targets for Devon means that there will need to be revisions of Local Plans. This will inevitably involve a call for sites and public consultation. The call for sites will result in a HELAA Report in June when comments can be submitted to assist with the decisions about future housing development. Should building permission be granted there will be s106 funds available but the amount is decided on a case-by-case basis.

Local Government Reorganisation will be announced by the national Government in June.

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6.2 District Councillor Rhys Roberts

D/Cllr Roberts also promised a brief report and advised:

Reminder that the Garden Waste collection services are frozen for the coming year. M5 Jcn28 remains supported by the Govt and awaits final confirmation of the funding.

MDDC Creative Communities Grant Scheme applications for up to £5,000 are invited.

There is a Town & Parish Council meeting on 29th April which he hopes will be well-attended.

National Waste and Recycling Results are very good with MDDC achieving 10th out of 197 authorities for recycling and 6th for residual tonnage, a top 3% result. MDDC achieved 97.31% collection of Council Taxes which is in the top 5% nationally.

New Local Plan is now to be looked at in the summer and now doubt which will require much debate.

Silverton are complaining about potholes – 6 volunteers are filling in potholes by training and equipment. Morchard Bishop is working well. Council advised that Thorverton's Road Wardens do not go beyond the 30mph limit as per the DCC guidelines.

The Community Asset policy is being considered in June, an opportunity for the Parish Council to take over some MDDC assets.

Cllr Sims asked about the road over Bickleigh Bridge. C/Cllr Keable advised that some repairs have been delayed as the repairing crews have been worked on potholes but this bridge is in the planned repairs.

Cllr Uglow mentioned concerns with the drain at the old Railway Bridge which is clogged that is damaging the effective repairs that were only recently completed.

6.3 Saturday Market

Cllr Hodge reported that he had received a cheque for garage rent (handed to the clerk) and enquiries had been made about:

- Displaying the agenda and minutes near the noticeboard in School Lane while the Thorverton Arms work is going on.
- The progress of the
- and Facebook planning application for the cemetery and the Biodiversity Net Gain report.
- Could the Housing Survey information be shared on NextDoor please.

7 Council Administration

7.1 Approval of IT Policy

7.2 Approval of Asset Register

7.3 Approval of Data Policy

These items are postponed to the next meeting.

7.4 Circulation of Bank Statements

The clerk advised that DALC had provided legal advice not to publish bank statements so they would not be published.

The clerk sought the Council's guidance on Cllr Wilson's request for a copy of bank statements for the last five years when all the financial information is available on the website for several years including signed & audited accounts.

Council **RESOLVED** to ask Cllr Wilson why it is worth spending the clerk's time to go through 5-years' worth of the bank statements.

Prop Cllr Crang **Sec** Cllr Hodges
[One person left the meeting at 8:28pm]

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8 Projects

8.01 All Housing Development Proposals and Possibilities

Cllr Crang outlined that the Council has been approached by Wain Homes wanting to attend a meeting to explain their proposals.

D/Cllr Roberts had been contacted by the developer at the pre-planning stage and they are keen to deal with the Parish Council and local community. He encouraged a public meeting to allow questions and comments from the public.

D/Cllr Roberts had understood that there was a number limit for potential properties in the Parish of Thorverton, but it is clear now that there is no set limit. He urged that the Parish to challenge the intensity of the developments rather than the fact of them. He will call both of the developments in so that MDDC Cllrs on the Planning Committee will consider them.

Cllr Crang had always understood that development is judged 'in proportion to the size of the community' but is now concerned that this isn't mentioned at all in the recent decision at Willand to approve 130 new homes.

Council asked the clerk to contact the Wain Homes agent to arrange a separate meeting as an Extraordinary Meeting on 28th April 2026 at 8pm to fit in with other TMH users. Due to the exorbitant cost demanded by Survey Monkey the Housing Survey will be reissued on a different system and ask those who have submitted to redo (with apologies) and ask MDDC to advise of any help.

The developer for Summerfield submitted the following written report:

Following our attendance at the last parish council meeting on the 10th of March, we held a consultation event at the Exeter Inn on the 12th. We asked attendees to express their views so that we could collate these to submit within a Statement of Community Involvement that would accompany any application. This could be done on the day, or via our website or to a specific email address. We have received around 30 responses so far. We gave attendees and other interested parties until the 9th of April to make comments. The feedback is largely negative, so we did get some positive comments on the day. The issues raised will not surprise you (too many cars, loss of greenfield, housing not needed, impact on highway safety, impact on drainage and education infrastructure), but this will be set out in a fuller response later down the line. Some people did choose to make some suggestions, including the incorporation of a public vehicle charging point and help for community efforts to start up a community shop. We can provide the former and have already contacted you on the latter point. There was a theme running through comments relating to not liking the design or the Heritage Homes development at Leonard Sq. and preferring a more traditional design that would reflect the village more. We are seeking to provide a more traditional design as a result. I also contacted the Millennium Green Trust, suggesting that s106 contributions could legitimately be directed towards maintenance and management of the Green as off-site public open space. The Trust has formally responded stating that it does not wish to be seen showing support for the proposal and do not wish to engage.

We continue to amend our layout and mix, which we will share with you when the time comes, but we are not quite there yet. We are incorporating 2 or 3 2bed bungalows, which reflects a need touched on in paragraph 8.6 of the housing needs survey. The primary size will be 3bed with a few 4bed homes. With regard to the affordable mix, we have agreed with the case officer at MDDC that this will be six affordable rent homes (4x1bed and 2x3bed) and 4x2bed discount open market homes to be sold at 75% of the open market value. This accords with the Council's Supplementary Planning Document on affordable housing. To my mind, this complements the provision for 12 social rented homes and 3 shared ownership homes in the CLT/Hastoe proposal on the Church Commissioners' land. The Council's case officer suggested that he was open to the self build plot being converted to an

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additional affordable unit, recognising the difficulties in delivering these as part of a larger proposal, hence the 10 homes set out above rather than the 9 required by policy. Should the Parish Council have any questions that may arise next week, I am happy to respond if you can send these through.

Cllr Foster provided the following report on the Affordable Housing project:

The CLT will be holding another Open Meeting (the eighth) on Thursday 16th April. A representative from our HA partner, Hastoe Group, will be present to introduce Hastoe to the village and answer questions on the project from their perspective. Detailed plans will not be available for this meeting, but will be presented by the architect in another meeting to be held in the summer.

[1 member of the public left at 9:02]

8.02 Water Trough in Dinneford St

The Chairman has tried a couple of possible contractors in the village without success. He will try a local building company. Council should confirm ownership. The clerk will complete a land registry search.

[D/Cllr Roberts left the meeting at 9:04]

8.03 Jubilee Green Bridge

Cllr Uglow will report the damage to DCC via the Report-a-Problem webpage.

8.04 Fence at Broadlands

Council **RESOLVED** to ask the clerk to propose to the MDDC that should the fences be sorted out to the tenants' satisfaction MDDC will take on the final fence and gate and maintain going forwards as landlords. **Prop** Cllr Foster **Sec** Cllr Uglow

8.05 New Cemetery incl quotes (gates)

Council **RESOLVED** to accept the new quote that would galvanise/hot dip the new gates.

Prop Cllr Foster **Sec** Cllr Crang

8.06 Barliabins including land slip quote

Council **RESOLVED** to accept the quote for an expert inspection of the slip. Just below the slip is the site of regular rubbish being dumped. **Prop** Cllr Crang **Sec** Cllr Hodges

8.07 Water Trough in Dinneford St

See 8.02 above.

8.08 School Lane Closure & Thorverton Arms

Council noted that work has started and the Council was very grateful for Summerfield offering to provide a temporary noticeboard.

8.09 SpeedWatch

Council had not received any volunteers and regrettably has to advise the SpeedWatch that they should cease operation and return the equipment provided to the Police. Council is very grateful for all the efforts of the volunteers over the years of the SpeedWatch project.

8.10 New Website

Work continues on the transfer from the old website to the new one.

8.11 Paws for Pleasure review

There have been several emails about this and it has been postponed several times from earlier meetings. A discussion was held to try to seek a way forward as there are still some differing views from Cllrs and members of the public. Cllr Wilson had circulated details to the Council (see Appendix B). Cllr Foster made the following statement:

As my name has been mentioned I would like to say just one thing, borrowing a quote from our late Queen when she responded to allegations made by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex. Her statement simply read that 'recollections may vary'. That's my final word on the matter and I will not make any further comment.

Council **RESOLVED** to note the correspondence from Cllr Wilson and from the parishioner. All correspondence has been read and Council therefore

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considers the matter closed.

Prop Cllr Uglow **Sec** Cllr Crang Cllr Sims **abstained** from the vote.

8.12 Allotments incl Burning Rubbish

The current agreement is that tenants must not:

- n) Light any bonfire unless on a Monday, Thursday and Saturday and after 16:00. The allotment holder must be present for the duration of the bonfire and for at least one hour afterwards. Bonfires should be no closer than 10 meters to any building and not cause nuisance to any other allotment holder or any resident. Any allotment holder found to be in breach of these rules may have their tenancy agreement terminated immediately.

Council **RESOLVED** that they are content with the rule on bonfires as it stands.

Prop Cllr Uglow **Sec** Cllr Hodges

8.13 Sale of Garage in the Quarry Car Park

The clerk advised that there were now two garages in the process of selling them. The clerk will confirm the garage rent review period of 5 years which is next reviewed for rents due on 1st July 2027.

8.14 Inconsiderate Parking in Silver Street

Clerk to advise the resident to report the parking to the Police.

[1 member of the public left at 10:05pm]

8.15 Cobbles by the Berry Dairy

The clerk will ask a local contractor to repair.

9 Planning

Planning Decisions

Council **NOTED** the following decisions

9.1.1 25/01604/HOUSE Perry Barn, Perry Farm Roof, door & window **APPROVED**

9.1.2 25/01607/LBC Perry Barn, Perry Farm Roof, door & window **GRANTED**

9.1.3 25/01269/HOUSE Fordy Bridge Extension (appeal) **APPEAL DISMISSED**

9.1.4 26/00088/FULL Redlands Surgery Installation defib etc **APPROVED**

Planning Applications

9.2 None received since the previous meeting.

Planning Applications Received Too Late for the Agenda

9.3 None received.

10 Recreation Ground

10.1 **Financial Report** for March – nil spent.

Council thanked Cllr Sims for repairing the wooden equipment steps.

10.2 Wayleave Agreement

Council **RESOLVED** to agree to the wayleave request from Openreach to install additional equipment on the pole in the Rec. **Prop** Cllr Crang **Sec** Cllr Foster

10.3 DAAT Memorandum of Understanding

Clerk advised he had signed the MoU as instructed by the Council.

10.4 Information & No Dogs Signs

Council will purchase only the small 'No Dogs' signs for now.

12 Finance

12.1 Council **NOTED** the bank balance of £ 41,226.06 (10th April 2026) and the receipts this month of Allotments £20.00, MDDC £8.00, Interest £29.50.

The clerk advised that he had not switched the account to Unity Trust as he was waiting for the Precept to be paid in by MDDC. They have advised that it is imminent but the money was not in our account as at the date of this meeting.

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12.2 Payments The clerk advised that item 12.2.2 would not be required as the original cheque had now been cashed.

Council **RESOLVED** to make the following payments (excluding 12.2.2):

The clerk advised that item 12.2.2 would not be required as the original

12.2.1 BRN Fitch	Grounds maintenance March	£ 450.00
12.2.2 Savills (UK) Ltd Client A/c Re CC Agricultural	Allotment field rent	£ 90.00
12.2.3 GX Accountancy & Bookkeeping Services	Payroll Jan-Mch 2026	£ 63.00
12.2.4 Thorverton WI	Hire for Extraordinary Meeting on 16 March	£ 25.00
12.2.5 Devon Association of Local Councils	Annual Subs inv 7575	£ 411.76
12.2.6 HMRC 2025-26 Quarter 4 PAYE and National Insurance	re clerk	£ 327.03
12.2.7 J P Roberts	Clerk pay for March	£ 544.50

13 Next Meeting

Council hopes to hold an Extraordinary Meeting will on Tuesday 28th April 2026 and the next regular meeting will be held on Tuesday 12th May 2026 which will include the Annual Parish Meeting, Annual Council Meeting and the Annual General Meeting of the Thorverton Recreation Ground Trust.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 10:34pm.

Signed Date
Cllr Andy Price, Vice- Chairman

Cllr Steve Keable

Devon County Councillors Report - Creedy, Taw & Mid Exe:
 Bickleigh • Brushford • Cadbury • Cadeleigh • Chawleigh • Cherton Fitzpaine • Coldridge • Cruys
 Marchard • Down St. Mary • Eggesford • Kennerleigh • Lapford • Marchard Bishop • Newton St. Cyres •
 Nymet Rowland • Poughill • Puddington • Sandford • Shobrooke • Silverton • Stockleigh English •
 Stockleigh Pomeroy • Thebridge • Thorverton • Upton Helions • Washford Pyne • Wembworthy •
 Woolfordsworthy • Zeal Monachorum Steve.keable@devon.gov.uk

Mid Devon Councillors Report - Taw Vale:
 Chawleigh • Lapford • Nymet Rowland • Wembworthy SKeable@middevon.gov.uk

April 2026



Welcome to my April newsletter - We could need good news and my April monthly report has this in abundance, as national media is simply full of international doom and gloom. At the local level this is a completely different story, especially when we do all pull together and in the same direction.

Stay informed about local decisions, community initiatives, and opportunities to have your say

Working together for rail investment



Photo Alan Cook/Devon Courier
 The urgent need to modernise the Tarka line between Exeter & Barnstaple due to soaring passenger numbers was recognised at a convention of some 70 delegates from local parish council, the rail industry, campaigners, district & county councillors & officers, including Members of Parliament, civic Mayors & Council Chairs.

The line service has seen rapid user growth to 1m annual passenger journey, and the usage data confirming the line to be a top performer on the GWR network but requires modernising with a £100m investment on doubling the track to Crediton, passing loops, signalling, car parking, tap ticketing, wifi & arrival information.

The 3rd annual meeting was a tremendous opportunity for the new and existing stakeholders to hear from the rail industry, the service provider, the independent advisor to the NDRDA and senior strategic transport authorities about how we address the well-known overcrowding and weather resilience situation on the service and to progress towards a formal Business Case that can be presented to central government for service enhancement.

Search: Tarka line convention

Gateway to Mid Devon

Leaders from across the political spectrum have welcomed the Government's decision to back two key transport schemes at the M5 and the station in Cullompton.

Motorway The £160m case for a new junction 28 on the M5 at Cullompton will unlock the strategic plans for 5,000 new homes in the designed garden village east of town, together with the prospect of world class facilities. This scheme is in the last 16 or 42 selected by Government to go forward for detailed development.

This is not an announcement of funding but is a huge step towards vital investment that will enable the planned 5,000 new homes to be built on the east side of Cullompton.

Cullompton Relief Road On the finalisation of funding it will follow on from the £36m Cullompton relief road due to start this summer.

Sport Hub Compensation, due to the relief road will enable the Cricket Club to relocate to the new garden village at Cullompton this summer. Work started in September 2024 on pitches for sport that will include cricket, football, rugby and hockey.

Railway Station to re-open at Cullompton for local services trains connection Exeter to Penzance and Taunton to Cardiff with an hourly service.

All of the above are leading to a total of some £220m to be invested in Mid Devon by 2030.

Located to the east of Cullompton, the Garden Village (Government awarded status 2017) has the potential to deliver up to 5,000 sustainable new homes in a country park landscape, with jobs and first class sports facilities.

Search: Culm Garden Village

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Devon County April News Brief

Maintaining **Devon's roads** is essential for residents, businesses and rural communities who rely upon them every day.

From this April the good news:-

- £36m for highway maintenance, 20% up on last year
- £100m capital investment for preventative highway maintenance
- £4m additional for drainage, gully clearance, ditching, & vegetation management
- £10m matched-funding opportunity for parish & town councils
- £0.5m to strengthen highways inspection.

Tackling climate change effects and protecting Devon's communities, £2.7m fund established following a winter where Storm Chandra flooded 180 properties in January – for flood prevention investment and advice.

 Search: Devon tackling climate change

90 Zero Emission Busses, as new fleet announced to replace the aging diesel vehicles, cutting harmful emissions and to improve quality and passenger journey experience across Devon, will be introduced with £7.5m of Government funding.

 Search: Devon New Busses

Libraries

From April the reduction in the Libraries budget has been reversed. Over 25,050 responses have been received in the libraries consultation, and to be reported upon at the end of this month.

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

The Government's announcement to fund much of the SEND deficit support for children who need support at school with medical challenges is welcomed with much relief.

 Search: Devon SEND

On the rise: the number of young people requiring support has doubled in the last 1-years. Government has proposals for change.

New Budget Year

The new budget was supported by all political parties with 52 voting in favour, 0 against and 2 abstentions. We all pull together in the same direction

*"This is a budget built on fiscal responsibility."
Councillor James Buczkowski, Devon County Council's
Cabinet Member for Finance*

Mid Devon District April News Brief

Mid Devon Local Plan

Now Government has issued the long awaited detail guidance Mid Devon will be announcing next month the likely 30-month timetable. As part of Government's plan to modernise and speed up the planning system the plan is likely to be formally started this October for completion in March 2029.

This means the bulk of the plan will be in place in outline form with Government by May 2028 when the new Unitary Authority will take on running local government in Devon.

Unitary Authority -

Government have the intension of announcing the form of new Unitary Authority(s) for Devon in mid June, to be followed by consultation and a final announcement in September.

Elections for the 'Shadow Unitary' are scheduled for May 2027 for vestment of the new local authority a year later.

HELAA - In 2022 and 2025 Mid Devon put out a call for landowners to submit plots of land they would wish to consider for residential housing or economic development for businesses.

Across this time these sites have been considered against criteria for what is suitable, achievable and available. These findings will be published in June.

The findings will be used to inform the local plan to determine where future development is to be located. Inclusion in the HELAA does not imply the site will be approved for development.

Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy A

Community Asset Transfer Policy is likely to be adopted by Mid Devon Council on 22 April. The policy will mainly apply to community land and buildings and normally favour long-term leasehold arrangements, with freehold transfers considered only in exceptional circumstances.

There has been a strong interest in Community Assets and some parishes have already approached MDDC. The passage of their applications will continue.

Information on Council-owned land and buildings is published under the Local Government Transparency Code and can be viewed on the Mid Devon District Council.

 Search: MDDC Transparency Code Assets - Land and building assets



Appendix B

Paws for Pleasure – Email from Cllr Wilson

*I request that this letter be recorded under a **Paws for Pleasure (PFP) review** in the minutes of next month's meeting (April 2026).*

I regret that it has become necessary to submit this review. It has been prompted by an internal email from [another Cllr A] which suggested that I am an unsuitable candidate for re-election as a councillor, allegedly due to Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) not responding to Thorverton Parish Council (TPC) regarding whether planning permission was required for our secure dog walking field.

This enquiry dates back four years, and I question why TPC did not pursue a response from MDDC during that time?

Paws for Pleasure opened on 1 June 2021. This date was chosen deliberately, as it was my late father's birthday.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought the country and economy to a standstill. As a self-employed company director with a significant mortgage, I received little to no government support and faced the genuine prospect of losing my business and our home.

When the furlough scheme was introduced, I secured a £50,000 Bounce Back Loan to support my business during the uncertainty.

In July 2020, my father passed away, and I also suffered a TIA.

*During this period, a family member suggested that we might consider opening our land as a secure dog walking field. At the time, I was unfamiliar with such businesses, but after extensive research, we concluded that our five acres of **amenity** land would be most suitable.*

This decision was motivated both by the need to secure a future income and to protect my family should I suffer further ill health.

From the outset, our intention was to create a high-quality facility.

I undertook due diligence regarding planning requirements. I consulted neighbouring landowners, none of whom raised objections, and concerns raised regarding beekeeping were later confirmed to be unfounded.

I reviewed and applied for planning via the MDDC planning portal, noting there was no specific category for secure dog walking fields. Our land is registered as amenity land and a historic orchard, not agricultural land, and is maintained accordingly.

Based on this research, it was clear to me that planning permission was not required. The works carried out were all permitted development, including:

- *replacement fencing with deer fencing*
- *rebuilding an existing field shelter to the same size and height*
- *creation of a porous car parking area*
- *connection of water and electricity to the existing structure*
- *retention of an existing, previously approved access*
- *installation of temporary dog agility equipment*
- *replanting of apple trees and additional tree planting*
- *compliance with local signage limitations*

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Paws for Pleasure opened quietly on 1 June 2021.

In December 2021, [another Cllr B] approached me informally outside the Exeter Inn, stating that [another Cllr C] had received an enquiry from a parishioner about our planning permission and suggested that " I can probably make the problem go away if you tell me all about it"

I declined to engage, as planning matters are neither the responsibility of individual councillors nor the Parish Council in this context.

Subsequently, without discussion or agreement by the full council and without the matter appearing on an agenda, a letter was sent to MDDC by the clerk at the request of [Cllrs B & C]. I later confirmed this via a Freedom of Information request. These actions were taken outside the TPC Code of Conduct.

I then received correspondence from MDDC planners. When approached and questioned, [Cllr C] later denied that any informal meetings had taken place and denied knowledge of the referral, despite stating "I know" when I informed him of MDDC's letter.

Repeated requests for an apology were refused. I also experienced behaviour that I consider to be a sustained smear campaign, resulting in my issuing a cease-and-desist letter to [Cllr B] and another individual.

With the assistance of then MDDC Councillor, Mr Deeds, the matter was reviewed by MDDC planners and later the Monitoring Officer. (MO)

A written set of recommendations was issued by the MO, and I was verbally assured by Mr Deed, who was in the planning department when he rang me, that there are no planning concerns.

The MO recommendations were largely dismissed by the then Chair of TPC and the clerk, despite being documented in council minutes.

Further information is available from the April 2022 Agenda Item 9.3 Paws for Pleasure Planning Status which refers to the discussion which was held outside the TPC Code of Conduct.

Despite claims that the matter was "resolved," TPC continues to pursue clarification years later, as reflected in subsequent emails by [Cllr A].

The impact of these events on my family has been significant. Being subject to false statements and misrepresentation is deeply distressing and has had lasting consequences.

My continued engagement with the council since these events has been solely to ensure that it operates lawfully, transparently, and within its Code of Conduct.

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