



**Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held in the Holsworthy Memorial Hall Holsworthy on  
Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at 7pm**

**Present:** Councillors; J. Hutchings, H. Parker, J. Allen, D. Coel, D. De ste Croix, I. Edwards,  
G. Mardle, L. Piper, S. Preston

**In attendance:** Town Clerk (TC), Assistant to the Town Clerk (ATTC) & Town Ranger (TR)  
40+ Residents

**5903. To Welcome by the Mayor**

Hello everyone and welcome to the Holsworthy Town councils Annual Towns meeting. An Annual Town's Meeting is a legally required yearly assembly of residents (electors) held in English towns and parishes between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> June. It is not a formal council meeting, but a community forum where citizens can discuss town affairs, question local councillors and hear reports on local activities and projects.

In the past, the record attendance I can remember was about 4 members of the public. Normally just one person, our current portreeve. So, we have changed things slightly this year by incorporating our Annual Towns Meeting with our annual presentations. This will hopefully make for a more beneficial meeting for councillors and member of the electorate.

**5904. Minutes of the 2025 Town's Meeting, having been read out, are recommended for approval.**

The Town Clerk read the Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

**Councillor I. Edwards proposed that the Minutes of the Annual Town's Meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025 be approved as a true record. This was seconded by Councillor D. De ste Croix and agreed. (8 For, 1 Abstention, 0 Against).**

**5905. Annual Report presented by the 2025/26 Mayor**

The mayor councillor Jon Hutchings welcomed everyone and gave a speech:

"My year as mayor started officially on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025. Within 48 hours the first complaints started on social media, a travellers camp had been set up on North Road and, no, it wasn't an April fools. Nigel and I decided to drive out and pay a visit and find out their intentions. I'm not sure if it was our friendly approach or the fact everywhere in Holsworthy was closed but the next day, they moved on, as promised.

We celebrated VE Day, 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary in typical Holsworthy style, with readings from the primary school and community college in Stanhope Park, a 'street' celebration in the Square with a fish supper and finishing off with a national tribute and beacon lighting.

June saw the twiners from Aunay-sur-odon arrive in Holsworthy. We held a civic reception and I attempted a speech in French, I think it went okay, at least people laughed in the right places. An emotional reception remembered some of the past faces of Holsworthy's Twining. Our French guests spent the weekend in Holsworthy celebrating 50 years of Twining.

In June, we were also told that the local fire co-responders would be withdrawn from Holsworthy and much of Devon. Of course, this caused uproar locally and led to several trips to Devon County Council's HQ in Exeter, along with many letters showing our objections. Thanks to my fellow councillor, Nigel Kenneally, we almost got arrested for breaking into a car in the car park of Devon County Council, well it was the same car as his, it just wasn't his! Our objections in particular were the effects the removal of the service would have on our local community and surrounding villages. I hope I made a small impact on the final decision, not to implement the planned changes.

St Peter's Fair week in July, a big week for me even when not wearing any robes. The Council welcomed mayors from local towns, Freeman of Holsworthy 2025/26 and our Community Champions for 2025 to the fair lunch. I gave a speech which 99% of people found amusing, I believe I only upset one person. My aim was to mention as many people as possible and show just how many people put their time and money into making St Peters Fair week such a fantastic event for Holsworthy.

At the end of the month we made a last minute decision to relocate and trial the weekly Wednesday Market in the Manor Court. The aim was to minimise disruption in the Square as the number of stalls had dwindled down. Very mixed comments but the trial proved it was a possibility. As you are all aware, we are not currently having a weekly market but are still working with partners to try and reintroduce it.

The Holsworthy Peloton invited me to start their Big Charity Bike Ride. So of course, I rode to the start of the event on my sons bike, in my robes, probably not the best and safest idea but it was great so see everyone start off on the long day of cycling for local charities.

The 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VJ Day was remembered with a short service. A Huge number of people joined us in our act of remembrance and 2 minutes silence.

In September, we held my first Mayor Charity Match day at the Holsworthy Football Club. A fun but rather wet day and evening. Matches took place with the ladies, the football club wearing wellies, the Holsworthy VETS and of course the Mayors select 11, or was 20! But even with 20 of the mayors team on the pitch, we still didn't win. A huge amount of money was raised and I thank everyone that helped, played and supported the event. Maybe another one this year?

Another fight started in towards the end of September when we were told that Torridge District Council may be trying to move 7.3million pounds worth of investment for the Agri-business Centre away from Holsworthy. I along with our local TDC Councillors expressed our disgust and I am happy to say the project is now back on track. A long overdue project that will bring investment and employment back to Holsworthy.

In November, our long battle with Jhoots ended and we welcomed a new pharmacy, Allied Pharmacies into the town.

The Christmas lights went up and we had another very successful switch on event, success judged on the number of people that attended on a cold November evening. Our free event for the people of Holsworthy.

A last minute call just before Christmas, from a concerned teacher in Holsworthy, who wanted to try and help some local families struggling over Christmas led to a huge effort from several agencies. We provided 20 local families with food parcels and presents for the children, just in time for the Christmas Holidays.

Into 2026 and our Bus shelter had a well needed facelift, more arguments over parking in the Square and the placing of road closed signs.

Last month we had Holsworthy's first ever inflatable theme park which was overwhelmingly popular with the local children.

Last week I travelled with Holsworthy football Club players to watch them play in their first ever final of Devon's St Luke's Cup. Unfortunately, not a win, but a very honourable game and a runners up position to be proud of.

During the year, I have attended presentation events for The Holsworthy Cadets, The Holsworthy Football Club, Holsworthy Cricket Club, Holsworthy Community College, Holsworthy Vintage & Classic Rally, year 6 transition service, also a 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and presented a card from the King, the re-opening of deer park, remembrance Sunday, Holsworthy carnival, numerous coffee mornings, a visit to a local SEND school and of course a very entertaining night at HATS Theatre.

The council have also completed works on the Badock Gardens Sunlounge, which will be officially opened on 6<sup>th</sup> June, the council have hosted several plays in the last year and there are three more coming over the next few months.

We have been working with Torridge District Council, who are about to embark on a massive upgrade of the Manor Offices a project due to start in June and be completed by the end of the year. This will include a new roof, new windows and for the Town Council a new office and reception area.

So that's what I and Holsworthy Town Council have been up to in the last 12 months.

But we can't do it all alone, a special thank you to Allison, our Town Clerk and Tegan, our Assistant to the Town Clerk. Both have worked really hard in and out of the office, keeping the council running from day to day. It has been a very different kind of year with a new accounting systems and the re-writing of many policies, orders and regulations. But we are getting there and I thank you both for all your efforts.

I would also like to thank all my fellow councillors who give their time for free to a pretty much thankless task of trying to make Holsworthy a better place.

A huge personal thank you to Cllr Parker, Helen who has attended many events representing myself as Mayor and our Town of Holsworthy. Another thankless task but does keep Holsworthy on the map.

We have had two resignations since the start of my second term, I am assured that wasn't the reason for the resignations though. Cllr Kenneally and Cllr Tadman, thank you both for your efforts as town councillors over the years.

There is one employee of the council I haven't thanked and that is our Handyman/general town dogs body and officially known as our Town Ranger. He may not have done a lot of work in the last 12 months, but we are so glad to have you back at work and hopefully healthy or at least healthier than you were. You have been hugely missed.

With all the positives, unfortunately there is always a negative. My next comment is not political in any way. The town council's relationship with our current County Councillor for Holsworthy rural is broken. The council were informed there were complaints against individual councillors back in June last year, but the actual complaints have never been officially received. This has meant no communication since the last election between us as councillors and our County Council representative. The County Councillor has attended one full council meeting and had one private meeting to try and resolve the situation in the last 12 months. Numerous branches have been offered but we have got nowhere. This only means Holsworthy, the largest Town in the division of 30 parishes are missing out on any County Council issues going both ways. Luckily, we have some very good officers in Devon County Council so have been able to bypass our councillor. I only mention this as I feel you should all be aware as our towns electorate.

So, finally, back to the positive, a personal thank you to everyone who has helped the council to achieve our goals in any way in the last 12 months. We have a fantastic community here in Holsworthy and it's because we all help each other, and long may it continue.

I am proudly serving my 5<sup>th</sup> Term as the Mayor for Holsworthy and I have nearly caught up with John Allen. I will do my best to keep Holsworthy on the front page of the Holsworthy post and I look forward to another successful year working with you all.

**5906. To receive any questions and consider any matters raised by Registered Electors within the Town of Holsworthy.**

Councillor J. Hutchings informed attendees that the legislation states, to ask a question or in the case of a vote you will need to be on the electoral roll for Holsworthy. Those of you who are on the electoral roll should have received a green card. If you would like to ask a question or if we need a vote, could you please hold up your green card.

**Remembrance Parade Timings:** A Resident stated they didn't receive a response regarding altering the timings for the Remembrance Day Parade from 3pm to 11am. Cllr. J. Hutchings responded that it will be included on the next Full Council Agenda and discussed.

**Chapel Street Lorry concerns:** A resident raised concerns regarding lorries using Chapel Street, stating that they frequently force traffic onto very narrow pavement, creating a hazard for pedestrians. The resident explained that incidents are sometimes filmed and have been reported to Devon Highways, but insufficient evidence has meant that the issue is not currently considered significant for action. The resident suggested forming a working group of businesses and individuals to gather and document evidence and structural damage in the area. Councillors noted the residents comments and suggested contacting our Devon County Councillor and advised the resident to submit evidence to Holsworthy Town Council. Cllr. L. Piper noted that Holsworthy Town Council have recently been in support of improved signage for lorries, noting that the council should discuss this and discuss reaching out to local companies to explore alternative transport routes.

**Dog bin at the Viaduct:** Cllr J. Hutchings provided an update regarding the removal of the dog bin at the viaduct.

**Potholes:** A resident jokingly suggested that the potholes be turned into a tourist attraction. Cllr. J. Hutchings informed residents that members of public have as much opportunity as the Town Council to report Potholes to Devon County Council via their website and encouraged residents to report new potholes or add to existing reports.

**Coles Mill Viaduct :** A resident requested an update on Coles Mill Viaduct. Cllr. L. Piper explained that the viaduct is now back in public ownership. Ecologist surveys have been completed and vegetation clearance has taken place. It is currently with the Department of Transport, although budgets and funding have affected progress. The current aim is to maintain it's structural integrity, while also working on supporting the idea to reopen it as a cycleway.

**Rydon Footpath:** A resident asked whether the footpath near Rydon would be completed. Cllr. L. Piper responded that the path should have already been completed but there were delays. Building works are ongoing at the lower part of the development and the path currently has hardcore surface. He stated that assurances have been given that the path will be completed, linking with the lower section of the Rydon 5 development and potentially connecting to the green space on the opposite side of the road.

**5907. Ideas brought forward from the public for Towns Projects.**

Councillor J. Hutchings informed the attendees of the current list of Holsworthy Town Council projects:

- Completion of the Sunlounge at Badock Gardens,
- Manor Offices refurbishment,
- Removal of the old tennis courts at Stanhope Park,
- Replacement towns vehicle,
- Bicycle displays around town,
- Allotments,
- Devolution,
- Christmas Lights & Switch-on event,

Supporting HASP with their storage,  
Supporting the Holsworthy Football Club with their upgrading,  
Working with other agencies to reopen the Coles Mill Viaduct,  
Working with Torridge District Council to relaunch the WW2 town trail digitally,  
Working with Torridge District Council to deliver the Playzone.

Councillor J. Hutchings then asked the electorates if they have any suggestions? And asked that they once again use their green cards.

No additional projects were brought forward.

#### **5908. Presentations**

##### **Mayor's Charity Cheque Presentation (Holsworthy Football Club & Holsworthy Museum).**

My two nominated charities for 2025/26 were the Holsworthy Museum and Holsworthy Football Club. From coffee mornings to raffles, to an inflatable theme park in Stanhope Park. It's been an interesting year. My special thanks go to Liza and Curt from the Museum and Andy and Steve from the Football Club for all their help during the year. My main fundraiser of the year and highlight of the year was the Mayor's Charity Match Day. Women, men, wellington boots, inflatables and DJ's. A hugely enjoyable day at the football club. My Mayor's select 11 ended up being around 20 players on the pitch and we still couldn't beat the Holsworthy VATS. The ladies beat the football club, although the club were wearing wellington boots! A huge thank you to Lloyd Whyte insurance brokers who match-funded all that we raised on the day. And a massive thank you to everyone who helped, played and supported the event.

The Total Amount raised during the year was £9042.67, this means each charity receives £4521.35.

Please can the representatives from the Museum and football club please come up.

Representatives from the Museum and Football Club walked to the front and were presented with a large cheque and photo opportunity.

##### **Mayor's Charities 2026/27**

Councillor Hutchings announced that the Mayor's charities for 2026/27 will be Holsworthy Scout Group and The Holsworthy Army Cadets.

##### **Presentation of the Freeman of Holsworthy 2026/27 Award:**

Our nomination for the Freeman of Holsworthy Award for 2026/27 is someone you would have all seen around town on many special occasions. He joined the Holsworthy Army Cadets in 2001 and has been detachment commander for 12 years. He is currently looking after 35 cadets in Holsworthy detachment. I know for a fact many young people from the town have benefitted from this persons commitment over the last 25 years. A very deserved nomination for the Freeman of Holsworthy 2026/27 is... Lieutenant Jim Harvey.

Jim Harvey was presented with a certificate and Freeman cup and said a few words of thanks. " I'm humbled, honoured and happy to receive this award. Community engagement and youth development is at the heart of Holsworthy Detachment. I remain committed to supporting local young people in being the best version of themselves using the fantastic opportunities on offer through membership of Devon Army Cadet Force."

**Presentation of the Community Champion Awards:**

Each Community Champion upon being named stood up and was presented with a certificate.

2 Councillor's partners who are always at hand to help at all of our events, often the first volunteers to arrive and the last to leave

Nathan Evans & Ian Parker

This person is always at coffee mornings if not on the door, helping serving coffee, she can be found running her lucky bag stall raising money for each charity

Debbie Florence

The lady up next was nominated by one of our green fingered councillors and says that the lady in question always helps out in Badock Gardens, especially getting ready before an event. She is also involved with the Chapel and the Men's Shed.

Liz Buckingham

During the last 12 months, I have worked closely with one of my mayors charities the Holsworthy Football Club. I have discovered a lot of what goes on behind the scenes that goes unnoticed. Some unsung heroes who keep the club running smoothly. From gate duties to driving the team bus, to cleaning the changing rooms at the end of the night. The first 2 nominations are for:

Dave Bingham & Tracey Bingham

The next person is definitely someone who works hard behind the scenes and definitely doesn't blow her own trumpet. She has been the treasurer of the Holsworthy Football Club for over 10 years, the first team secretary and is generally there to help the club.

Amy Rogers

Finally but certainly not least. When you see someone in the square selling raffle tickets during summer or just before Christmas for the Lions Club, no matter what the weather, one of the sellers is almost guaranteed to be this man. I wouldn't like to guess how many hours he has spent in the Square over the years. Our final Community Champion is

Jeff Wyatt.

Jeff Wyatt thanked the people of Holsworthy for all their support to Holsworthy Lions throughout the years. Thank you very much to Holsworthy Town Council.

**Presentation of Grants 2026/27:**

Each grant representative upon being called stood up and was presented with a cheque.

Bude and Holsworthy Macular Society	£200
Holsworthy Vintage Rally	£250
Wellbeing of Women (WOW)	£250
Holsworthy Army Cadets	£300
Holsworthy Bowls Club	£200
Holsworthy 1 <sup>st</sup> Scouts	£300
Holsworthy Hamlets Flower Club	£100
Holsworthy Preschool Playgroup	£300
All Blacks Netball Club	£200
<b>Total amount granted</b>	<b>£2,100</b>

**Presentation of Recurring Grants 2026/27:**

Each recurring grant representative upon being called stood up and was presented with a cheque.

Holsworthy Youth Centre	£700
Holsworthy Rural Community Transport	£700
St Peter's Fair Committee	£2,000
Holsworthy Carnival Committee	£400
Holsworthy Museum	£400
Holsworthy Mutual Aid	£1,200
<b>Total amount granted</b>	<b>£5,400</b>

Cllr. J. Hutchings said thank you everyone for coming, please do stay and have some refreshments and a drink. If you have any questions the councillors and staff are here, please ask away.

**5909.Close**

Councillor J. Hutchings closed the meeting at 19:51

Signed .....

Dated .....