

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held in Room 3 at the Town Hall on Wednesday 8th March 2017 at 7:30pm

Present: Councillors: Pam Barrett (Chair), Janet Jones, Simon Rines, Neil Smith, Pamela Forbes, Fanny Jackson, Mark Maish, Greg Porter and Andy Stokes

Press: No press in attendance.

In attendance: Councillor John Nutley (District) and 11 members of the public.

Part I (Open to the Public)

17/181. Apologies:

Councillors: Ron Fox, Linus McCloskey, Dan Simpson and Stuart Barker (County & District)

17/182. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

17/183. To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 8th February 2017:

Signed and approved by Cllr. Pam Barrett with amendment to Minute No: 17/170 as requested by Cllr Stuart Barker – see Minute No: 17/187 below.

17/184. Questions raised by the Public: None

17/185. Grants Presentation to local groups and organisations:

The Wigram Community Association (Community News Sheet), Bungalow Youth Project, Sharing Buckfastleigh, The Friendship Group and Smooth Space each received £250.00 which was presented by Cllr Pam Barrett.

17/186. Police report:

The Police Report for February was read out by the Chair.

52 incidents for Buckfastleigh with 6 related to the A38 and 15 recorded crimes.

On 10th February 2017, a warrant was executed on a property in Chapel Street where a cannabis grow was discovered together with approx. £5,000 worth of equipment and £1,000 in cash. The cannabis and equipment was seized and will be destroyed.

A male convicted of assault following an incident on 4th October 2016 has been given a community order, a rehabilitation order and ordered to pay £300 compensation and £50 costs.

Speed checks around the parish have been undertaken following reports of speeding. A number of vehicles have been stopped and drivers educated about driving at speed. No tickets were issued and the police will continue to monitor this.

With effect from 1st March 2017, there will be increased penalties for using hand held mobile devices while driving. Penalty points will double from 3 to 6 and the fine from £100 to £200.

17/187. Reports from County Councillor and District Councillors:

Report from Cllr John Nutley:-

Following the 12% pay rise and £6,000 bonus awarded to Nicola Bulbeck, the Chief Executive of Teignbridge District Council, which was put forward by the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jeremy Christophers, it has now been agreed that all pay rises for senior staff will have to be approved by full Council. It has been acknowledged that proper procedure was not followed although no reprimand has taken place.

Members of the Town Council reminded Cllr Nutley that this is a breach of the Code of Conduct by the Leader of the Council and is unacceptable when public sector employees have consistently had their pay frozen in recent years.

Report from Cllr Stuart Barker which was read out by the Chair:-

Cllr Barker has raised issues with Dartmoor National Park (DNPA) about information and support for the Council which will be dealt with when new planning officer arrangements are confirmed.

A discussion has taken place with the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group commissioners concerning the future services that will be provided at the Health and Wellbeing hub, formally Ashburton and Buckfastleigh Hospital.

The amendment to the minute taken at the February 2017 full Council meeting No. 17/170 was noted. Clerk to update as follows:-

“.....after 5 years of zero increase TDC has again decided to increase its share of Council Tax by £5.00 per year.”

School funding - the consultation on the new funding formula, if applied, would mean a decrease of £23k to the baseline of 2016/17. The County Council is challenging the government on the proposals. An additional fact sheet was provided with this report concerning funding for schools which was noted.

Cllr Pam Barrett expressed disappointment that the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan had not been brought to the attention of the Town Council earlier in the process. This had been looked at by Teignbridge District Council (TDC) in July 2016 and yet there has been no information or public consultation until now. The Council are not in a position to comment on the plan as we have not been properly informed and only one consultation date in the whole of the district has been facilitated. The consultation period is for 6 weeks for a plan that will span 30 years.

Members agreed that the plan will impact Buckfastleigh due to the lack of infrastructure in place.

Action: Clerk to invite Cllrs Barker, Dennis and Nutley to a separate meeting to provide information to the Council.

Cllr John Nutley was asked why the collection of business rates will affect the car parking receipts for Buckfastleigh which amount to £34,000. Cllr Nutley confirmed that TDC is carrying out a review of car parking in the district.

The Town Council assets working party have requested information concerning all the running costs of the car parks in the town from TDC.

One member of the public arrived.

Two members of the public made a complaint about the alleged aggressive ticketing methods of the Devon County Council (DCC) Civil Enforcement Officer responsible for on-street parking in the town.

It was acknowledged that parking is becoming increasingly difficult and that the behaviour of both DCC and TDC enforcement officers is not acceptable.

It was agreed that the parking working party needs to be reactivated, but there are not enough volunteers coming forward to help.

Action: Clerk to send letters of complaint to the DCC and TDC parking sections concerning the alleged behaviour of their Enforcement Officers. Any reports of harassment by an officer should be brought to the attention of the police.

The Council has received information from various sources that following the recent reduction of the X38 bus service to Buckfastleigh from Exeter and Plymouth, that there are further cuts proposed. The current reduction has already had a significant impact on resident's dependent upon public transport for work and education and it is important to establish the actual position. It was agreed at the PEAT meeting that letters should be sent to both Stagecoach and Devon Transport to clarify the position.

Cllr Neil Smith: It appears that DCC is choosing to subsidise some routes, but not Buckfastleigh.

17/188. To receive the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 22nd February 2017:

Noted.

To resolve the following recommendation from Minute No: 17/88. Proposal to sponsor the Moor Otters – a Public Initiative in aid of Dartmoor National Park

Cllr Pam Barrett: This is a public arts project which will encourage tourists to follow a trail. It has been suggested to have one otter in the Town Hall and move it around local businesses for a week at a time with business owners encouraged to contribute to the initiative. The otter is 7 feet high inclusive of the plinth it sits on, but it must be in a secure location.

Decision: Proposal unanimously carried.

To resolve the following recommendation from Minute No: 17/89. Review of Risk Assessment Management 2017.

Decision: Resolved

To resolve the following recommendation from Minute No: 17/90. Review of the Statement of Internal Control 2017.

Decision: Resolved

To resolve the following recommendations from Minute No. 17/91. Review of the Investment Strategy – suggested amendment for discussion.

Cllr Andy Stokes: The Town Council should have an ethical component in making any investment of public money as there is a moral issue to this.

Cllrs Simon Rines and Fanny Jackson agreed that they could not support the draft amendment due to the reference to alcohol, gambling and tobacco. The purchase and consumption of alcohol and gambling such as a bingo night are permitted activities in the Town Hall including the monthly cinema showing which would be a conflict of interest.

Action: Cllr Andy Stokes to re-draft the amendment to reflect the above comments and the final draft to be agreed by the Finance Committee.

17/189. To receive the minutes of the Planning, Environment and Transport Committee held on 1st March 2017:

Noted.

17/190. Town Council Projects update:

- Town Ranger – the new part-time post will be advertised by the Clerk shortly.
- Helipad – the Council is awaiting quotes for the new LED floodlights, but there have been issues with TDC regarding planning permission. There are already lights in situ and the proposal is to replace with modern lighting that is suitable not only for use by the Devon Air Ambulance, but also the Football Club.
- The CAB outreach service is now funded up until the end of March and will continue to be funded by the Council under the 2017/18 budget.
- The Town Hall grant has now been paid and the first of two instalments for 2017/18 is due to coincide with the receipt of the precept at the end of April.
- Buckfastleigh Swimming Pool will also receive the Town Council grant in two instalments as above.

Community solar panels – Cllr Andy Stokes is working with the Devon Association of Renewable Energy to identify other community buildings that could benefit from this project.

- The Community Development Fund is up and running and new applications for 2017/18 who meet the criteria are encouraged from community organisations.

17/191. Youth activities programme progress report:

A questionnaire has been posted on Survey Monkey as an online consultation to ascertain what young people would like to do for eg. arts and crafts, getting active, learning and growing. The fund-raising coordinator and the Chair are holding discussions with primary schools, nurseries, youth clubs etc and a drop-in event has been arranged for Monday 20th March in the Town Hall from 3.00 to 6.00pm.

This is the first stage of the budget funding with the second and third stages for funding opportunities and the design of activities. £1,000 has been earmarked from the Community Development Fund for the first stage, but it is likely that £5,000 will be needed for the whole project with a view to starting activities in May.

17/192. Town Council response to school budget cuts:

Representatives of both Buckfastleigh and Ashburton Town Councils have met with Richard Arundel, Head of Buckfastleigh Primary School. Under the new government funding formula it is proposed that £446 per pupil will be lost with effect from September 2017. This is a huge loss and contrary to the statements that Devon schools will be better off under the new scheme. Further information and clarification has been requested from Mel Stride, MP.

All schools in the area may suffer from a potential loss of staff and Richard Arundel will be writing to parents to explain the situation.

Action: Members agreed to start a campaign on behalf of the schools and that a letter will be sent to Mel Stride and the Secretary of State for Education.

Cllr Simon Rines: There is a need to establish the facts and call a public meeting with representatives from DCC and the MP to have a collative voice.

There was the suggestion that a proper demonstration together with other parishes is arranged.

Cllr Andy Stokes read out a draft letter to the MP and the report provided by Cllr Stuart Barker – The Education Fact Sheet was noted with reference to the following statement:-
“This is a national issue and many councils have had to make similar decisions. There is just not enough money in the education pot to cope with the pressures of statements and children with special needs.” (original source not known)

Amendments to Cllr Stoke’s letter were made with a view to sending the final copy to the press including an invitation to a public meeting and the suggestion to set up a signature petition in support of the Town Council’s letter.

17/193. Chair’s Announcements. None

17/194. Clerk’s Announcements. None.

17/195. Correspondence. None.

17/196. Reports from other meetings and working parties attended by Members.

Cllrs Mark Maish, Janet Jones, Andy Stokes and the Clerk had a positive discussion with Stephen Forsey, TDC’s Estates Manger for Economy Assets at the second meeting of the assets working party.

Cllr Mark Maish: Cllr Stuart Barker has contributed £1,500 towards the refurbishment of the playground at Buckfastleigh Primary School.

The pop-up nightclub event in the Town Hall was very successful and further dates will be arranged.

Cllr Greg Porter: Suggestion to hold a Councillor's surgery following the recent arrival of the Council Tax bills.

Cllrs Janet Jones and Fanny Jackson attended a Wildspace meeting to look at the progress of the wildlife garden to the rear of the Town Hall.

Cllr Simon Rines has provisionally booked 'Colourscape' to assess the suitability of potential sites in Buckfastleigh for this attraction.

Cllr Pam Barrett: The Neighbourhood Plan is now out for consultation and a public event has been arranged for 29th March 2017 in the Town Hall. Buckfast Abbey have congratulated the Council for the contents and purpose of the Plan, but would like to meet with Councillors to discuss further.

Action: Clerk to arrange a meeting to include Cllrs Barrett and Rines.

Cllr Janet Jones: At a meeting of Buckfast Village Hall management committee it was brought to her attention that the Buckfastleigh Drama Club has now unfortunately folded.

The library continues to arrange a programme of activities and fund raising events.

Cllr Andy Stokes attended the Cycle South Dartmoor meeting. Sustrans are now looking at a cycle path that connects Plymouth to Ivybridge and Ashburton and a feasibility study is being undertaken ready for funding availability. National Bike Week will be held from 10th to 18th June 2017.

'Big Lunch Extras' will take place on 18th June 2017 and will be joining up with the 'Great Get-together' to bring communities together.

Cllr Pam Barrett: At the Emergency Plan and Flood Plan evening, a mock-up exercise took place to identify gaps in both the Town Council and Station Road plans. It was noted that the emergency equipment needs to be kept up-to-date and storage locations registered. A live flood exercise for the town is planned for June.

A question of sport consultation will be held on 30th March in the Town Hall to encourage local groups and organisations to work together to develop a sports strategy for the town to enable access funding.

The All Hands to the Pump event will be held on Saturday 11th March at South Devon Railway and the second Wool Gathering on Sunday 19th March in the Town Hall.

17/197. Urgent Items: None

Meeting Closed at 9:38pm.

Signed Date.....