

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall on Wednesday 10th June 2015 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors: Ron Fox (Chair), Pam Barrett, Katie Coates, Billy Hartstein, Janet Jones, Mark Maish, Linus McCloskey, Simon Rines, Neil Smith, Graham Squires, Andy Stokes and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

Press: One representative of the press

12 members of the public

In attendance: G. Orme on behalf of the Buckfastleigh Community Forum (BCF)

Part I. (Open to the Public)

The Chair opened the meeting and the Deputy Chair, Cllr Pam Barrett took over administration of the agenda and invited questions from the public.

15/51. Questions raised by the Public:

1) Draft Neighbourhood Plan (NP) has some visionary ideas, but where will funding come from and will it increase the precept?

Cllr Pam Barrett: Various potential sources including Local & National government and EU grants are available to communities implementing Neighbourhood Plans and would be considered. No discussions yet about setting precept for next year.

Cllr Simon Rines: NP is a 'wish list' owned by community. Also includes planning guidance and must be approved by planning authorities before effectual. Next stage is to see how aspects of plan could be implemented.

2) Have NP steering group consulted with affected land-owners?

Cllr Simon Rines: Some have already and Martin Parkes of Devon Communities Together is investigating further.

3) Gill Orme of Buckfastleigh Community Forum asked to present report and request on behalf of chair of BCF, Kathryn Hughes.

Response: Deferred to Item 13.

4) Enquiry as to progress of proposed double yellow lines for Old Totnes Rd & Plymouth Rd.

Cllr Katie Coates: County Highways Department have agreed but are still waiting funding.

Cllr Janet Jones: This matter should be deferred to next Highways & Planning Committee meeting

5) Objection that no terms of reference and minutes for working parties had been provided - is this open & democratic? Would precept need to be increased to pay for any proposed structural changes?

Cllr Pam Barrett: Only Communications Working Party had met so far (and it's proposals would be discussed in agenda item 19), so terms of reference for other working parties were not yet agreed but would be available after their first meeting. No discussions yet about TC budget for 2016/17, but unlikely that structural changes would incur extra costs

6) Request for definition for 'stakeholders' who will be invited to meeting.

Cllr Pam Barrett: This is not yet decided, but the intention is to involve community as far as possible.

Cllr Neil Smith: The Council intend to communicate details of the current and future budget to the community but that further work was needed before this could happen. It is hoped that details of how much money the Council has and how it is currently spent could be made available so that the community could play a part in deciding future spending priorities.

7) Statement made that although he supports clearer meetings, "this is not a matter of popularity, it is a matter of Government."

Cllr Pam Barrett: Town Councillors were fully aware of the importance of Town Council in leading and influencing important town issues. Councillors had stood for election specifically because of the important issues facing the town and the increasing likelihood of further challenges as District, County and national government budgets are further reduced in coming years. It will be necessary for an elected Town Council to agree local priorities and ensure that the needs of the community are actively and effectively pursued to protect the services and facilities the town relies on. It is important the Town Council improved its communication process so that a proper dialogue takes place within the community about what needs to be done.

8) Why is "Buckfastleigh Independents Group (BIG)" is still being used to refer to the Town Council when three Councillors are not members of the group?

Cllr Barrett: "BIG" still exists and is a group separate to the Town Council. BIG is a group of people wanting to be involved in discussions about the way local government works and supporting the aims of the BIG Town Councillors. The BIG group hope that more people will step forward to stand as Town Councillors at future elections.

Cllr Janet Jones: The Council is not an exclusive group and that the community must be encouraged to work with the Council.

15/52. Police Report:

No report received

15/53. Apologies:

Councillors Dan Simpson, Charlie Dennis (District), John Nutley (District) and Kathryn Hughes (Buckfastleigh Community Forum).

15/54. Councillors invited to declare any interests:

Cllr Andy Stokes: A pecuniary interest in Agenda Item No: 19) the communications working party.

15/55. Urgent items:

Cllr Janet Jones: Dartmoor National Park Authority requires two nominations for Parish representatives by 12 June 2015. Noted.

15/56. To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 20th May 2015:

Signed and approved by Councillor Ron Fox.

15/57. To receive the minutes of the Highways and Planning Meeting held on 3 June 2017:

Noted.

15/58. To receive the minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 27 May 2015:

Noted.

15/59. End of Year Accounts 2014/15 including the Annual Return:

Clerk: Accounts are with the Independent Auditor, but had been signed off as satisfactory with no issues arising.

The Annual Return was duly signed off by the Chairman and the Town Clerk.

15/60. To receive the minutes of the Tourism and Recreation Committee held on 2nd June 2015:

Noted.

15/61. Actions required following the presentation of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan at the Public Consultation held on 27 May 2015:

Cllr Simon Rines: Responses collated from the event to the 10 key elements of the draft plan will be examined. Members of the public who attended the event were divided into two groups to discuss five each of the above elements. The draft plan is currently being revised by the Vice Chairman of the steering group.

There is a need for more work on transport and parking. It has been agreed that further research and a professional opinion should be sought to examine traffic and transport within the parish and in particular, the pros and cons of changes to the one way system. Further funding will be required for this, the final consultation and printing costs. Tim Stacy volunteered to look at a parking audit for the town which can be fed into the information collated for transport.

The ecology and biodiversity elements of the plan require further work and again need expert opinion. The Council now needs to take ownership of the plan and a final opinion from the planning consultant will be required before the document is passed to the planning authorities for approval. The Town Council will need to apply for further Locality funding as the plan is not funded from the precept and the District Council will pay for the referendum.

Cllr Janet Jones: Martin Parkes of Devon Communities Together has suggested that a meeting of the steering group should re-convene and also to meet with the National Park. Members should be mindful that there are now three Town Councillors on the group.

Cllr Simon Rines: Following consultation with Devon Communities Together it has been agreed that he should continue in his role as Chair of the NP Steering Committee. Martin Parkes has advised that the more active members of the group who have followed the process, need to have input. He will email the members to discuss progress and plan the next steps. The Council is asked to agree that the plan should be delayed whilst the transport analysis can be undertaken.

Cllr Neil Smith: Public consultation should take place before any decision is reached regarding the direction for traffic on Fore Street to avoid the situation that has arisen in a neighbouring community. It would be helpful for a survey to be carried out by Devon County Council to examine the impact.

Decisions:

It was agreed that further funding locality funding should be applied for and options investigated about who could carry out the traffic survey.

Further consultation should include the Stagecoach bus company.

Display panels from the consultation evening should be displayed in the Town Hall and further publically accessible locations during the summer until the end of August.

The referendum has been provisionally scheduled for the end of the year.

15/62. Electoral Review of Devon:

Cllr Neil Smith: The Electoral Commission proposes to reduce the number of County Councillors for Devon by two. The proposed new boundary would effectively remove part of the northern end of the Ashburton and Buckfastleigh ward including Buckland.

Following discussion it was agreed that the current boundaries are not logical and communities such as Dean Prior and Holne which are within South Hams, identify with Buckfastleigh. The number of residents in each parish has to be taken into account to create roughly the same size of electorate in each ward. The consultation is open for public comment and it was agreed that the Council should submit a response presenting the case that the ward should go towards the west rather than the east as proposed in the review.

Action:

Cllr Neil Smith to draft a response and the Clerk to circulate to Members for any further comment prior to submission by 6 July 2015. Copy to be sent to neighbouring parishes for information.

15/63. Whitecleave Quarry – public complaints procedures:

Gill Orme read out an email from Kathryn Hughes, Chair of the Buckfastleigh Community Forum (BCF) dated 11 June 2015 to the Town Council which raised a number of issues and concerns about the current activity at Whitecleave Quarry.

Devon County Council is now issuing a weekly complaints log and the Town Council was asked to publish this on the website.

There is concern that the Devon County Council as the planning authority is not fully investigating complaints from the community or taking the appropriate enforcement action with regards to beaches of conditions.

The Chair of the BCF proposed to draw up a revised terms of reference for the reconvened Quarry Liaison Group to include a representative from BCF. The quarry operator has agreed to consider new terms.

Decisions:

A revised terms of reference should be drawn up for consideration.

A Town Council led working party should be set up to consider matters relating to the quarry.

Copies of monitoring reports received by the BCF should also be made available to the Town Council.

15/64. Chairman's Announcements:

None

15/65. Clerk's Announcements:

None

15/66. Correspondence:

None

15/67. Reports from County Councillor and District Councillors:

No reports received prior to this meeting.

15/68. Reports from other meetings attended by Members:

Cllr Katie Coates: attended a recent meeting of the Teignbridge Association of Local Councils (TALC) that meets bi-monthly. This facilitates the opportunity for all Town and Parish Councils within Teignbridge to meet up and exchange views. A talk by N. Davies, Business Manager for Strategic Place at Teignbridge included a reminder that Parish Councils are statutory consultees and the guidelines in planning should be referred to when looking at applications. The existing Planning Charter has been re-drafted to include 23 commitments and will be circulated in due course.

The meeting also looked at grass and verge cutting by the County Council. Due to lack of funding this work is currently contracted to the District Council and only visual splays to highways are now being cut.

Cllr Janet Jones: The proposed 'Beating of the Bounds' event which will include the Park Ranger, will now provisionally take place in the October half term holiday. The walk will be roughly seven miles long, but volunteers are needed.

Action:

Working party to be set up to walk part of the boundary to assess the practicalities such as potential health and safety issues and obstructions such as gates and hedges.

Cllr Mark Maish: Met with B. Bryant, the District Council Recycling Officer and other Parish Councils and community groups to discuss composting initiatives. A new £35.00 per year charge to empty the green bins will come into effect from September 2015 although a new food waste bin will be introduced with no extra charge to households. The Recycling Officer would be pleased to give a presentation about composting to the community.

Action:

Cllrs Maish and Stokes to arrange and invite the community to attend a presentation event.

Cllr Squires: Cllr Barrett attended the last meeting of the skate park working party as the Chair of the Victoria Park trustees. The project will need access to a considerable amount of funding and a grant application will be made to Landfill Tax credits fund. The aim is to submit the grant application for the 1 October round and it is likely that match funding will be required.

Cllr Barrett: The Victoria Park trustees are looking to make further improvements to the park, including options for the skate park and other ideas such as an outdoor gym. A successful grant application will require evidence of clear community consultation and economic / social regeneration. There is a need for further discussion between the park trustees and other interested parties.

It was noted that grant funding from Cllr S. Barker has not yet been received for the skate park project.

Action: A meeting to be set up between Victoria Park Trustees and skate park group to discuss grant application process.

15/69. Reports from working parties attended by Members:

Draft proposal from the communications working party were discussed.

Cllr Jones: There is also a need for visibility and engagement in the community in addition to the different forms of communication presented in the report.

Cllr Squires: Who will be responsible for carrying out all the recommendations listed? Never found the Clerk's minutes or reports to be difficult to understand. Council minutes are a legal requirement and as such certain formats must be adhered to.

Cllr Barrett: It is good practice to ensure that relevant papers be made available to the public prior to meetings and that a brief summary of key decisions and actions be made available quickly after meetings. It can take over 5 weeks for full minutes to be produced, agreed and published and the intent of the communications review was to ensure that the local community knew what was happening as soon as practicable.

Cllr Smith: A summary of the agenda should be published in advance of any meeting.

Cllr Jones: The whole ethos of the Council is being changed.

Cllr Hartstein: The Council needs to alter the way it engages with the public and this could be achieved by simplifying the Standing Orders and improving communications.

Decisions:

It was agreed that the recommendations of the Communications working group be adopted including:

- Town Council agendas and relevant papers to be made available to the public in advance of meetings.
- Agenda to be produced as a poster highlighting any non-standard agenda items.
- Key messages to be agreed at the end of each meeting and published before the minutes are produced.
- Monthly Councillor surgeries to be introduced on a trial basis at a variety of locations and times. Cllrs Fox and Barrett to attend the first surgery on 4 July.
- An official Town Council Facebook page to be created.
- Cllr Rines and the Clerk to work on new templates for Word documents for the agenda, minutes and posters.
- Further consideration to be given to establishing a youth representative to the Council, a town photo library and use of the community news sheets.

Other working parties as detailed on the agenda have yet to meet and it was agreed that the final item regarding cycle routes within the parish should be discussed within the remit of the steering group and included as part of the transport section of the Neighbourhood Plan.

It was agreed that copies of reports from the proposed internal review should be made available to the public.

15/70. Urgent Items:

None

Meeting closed at 10.10pm.