

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting using the remote meeting service Zoom held on Wednesday 20th May 2020 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillors: Andy Stokes (Chair), Pam Barrett, John Bailey, Sue Clarke, Huw Cox, Ron Fox, Darren Greep (for part of the meeting), Kate Kayley, David Patrick, Sylvee Phillips and Judith Hart (Town Clerk)

In attendance: Cllrs John Nutley and Sarah Parker-Khan (Teignbridge District Council). The Rev Tom Benson (St. Luke's Church)

Press: None

20/18. Apologies: No apologies received

Cllrs Pamela Forbes and Gwena Harman did not give apologies.

20/19. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

20/20. To approve and sign the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 22nd April 2020 and review actions from this meeting:

Actions from this meeting:

- The Clerk confirmed that Teignbridge District Council (TDC) had not responded to the Town Council and requests from the community to suspend car parking charges to support residents who now have the additional cost of parking fees whilst they are working from home, are furloughed or have lost their employment.
- Cllr Stokes has not received a reply from Mel Stride, MP to his second communication concerning the lack of central and local government support during the coronavirus pandemic.

20/21. Questions and comments from the public: No public in attendance

Tom Benson offered to take any questions regarding the Covid-19 Community Emergency Response team effort. See Agenda Item No. 9 later in the meeting.

20/22. Questions to District and County Councillors:

Cllr Parker-Khan was invited to give an update concerning the District Council's response to supporting communities.

Cllr Stokes has written to various members of TDC asking for information for eg. who is managing the delivery of food parcels, but to date has received no reply. He expressed his concern that the democratic process has been suspended.

Cllr Parker-Khan confirmed that TDC Standing Orders include emergency powers and meetings have resumed via Zoom and YouTube. The first Executive meeting took place on 19th May and planning meetings have re-started.

Tier-1 food packages were primarily coordinated by Devon County Council (DCC) and delivered by a local food delivery company, but only 53 parcels to date are known to have been delivered within the whole of the Teignbridge area which is very low. DCC have been asked to supply data to this effect as currently it is not clear as to what help is available and to whom.

Notification of new planning applications will no longer be published in the local press and recycling centres have re-opened, but only for certain types of waste. There are currently no lifeguards at the beaches so residents and visitors are asked to take care when visiting these areas for exercise.

TDC have set up a £167,000 hardship fund which provides emergency payments for up to £200.00 per household if they have less than £500.00 in capital. An online application is available on the TDC website to this effect.

Cllr Stokes raised concerns that as TDC had originally been tasked with the delivery of Tier-1 packages that this had been passed back to DCC and it would be helpful to know which residents in Buckfastleigh are receiving this support so that help from within the community is not duplicated? He also expressed disappointment that TDC had not held any meetings for two months and that little information or data had been forthcoming.

20/23. Budget Analysis Report 01.04.20 – 30.04.20: Noted

20/24. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.04.20 – 30.04.20: Noted

20/25. End of Year Draft Accounts and Bank Balances 2019/20:

Cllr Clarke asked if the Town Council would be deferring the payment of rent to the Town Hall as staff are currently not using the offices?

Action: Town Council rent payment to the Town Hall to be raised as an agenda item at the next meeting.

Members reviewed the Assets Report and agreed that the external CCTV should be removed from the schedule as it is of no commercial or community value.

Decision: Clerk to action but to continue to insure while the equipment remains in situ.

Cllr Bailey raised the issue of the depreciation of assets and why this is not applicable to Town Council owned assets.

Action: Clerk to provide a definitive response after the meeting.

20/26. To approve the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20:

Action: Members unanimously approved the Annual Governance Statement which was signed by the Chair and Clerk.

20/27. Buckfastleigh Covid-19 Community Emergency Response Update:

Tom Benson advised the meeting that demand for the Foodbank had increased but the volunteers are still coping and have established a good relationship with those who need this service. Most of the food is being sourced locally and local businesses continue to be very supportive.

Tom would urge people to come forward for help before a crisis is reached. He is aware that many referrals are coming from friends and neighbours. He explained that demand has increased by 700% compared to an average week before the pandemic and is from residents who have been furloughed, are self-employed, low income families and some elderly households.

Cllr Stokes conveyed his thanks on behalf of the Town Council to both Tom and his assistant, Laura McAdam and asked if the Foodbank needs financial support?

Tom explained that they had received very generous donations and grants at the start of the crisis and that donations from individuals are still being received.

It was noted however, that the cost of utility bills for St. Luke's Church had increased and in particular the telephone. The Clerk suggested that under different circumstances the emergency hub would have been the Town Hall and these costs would have been met by the Town Council so it would not be unreasonable for the church to recover some of these costs from the Council.

Tom was also asked if their current Broadband requirements need upgrading particularly as church services are now held virtually?

Action: Tom to provide details of costs.

Cllr Nutley asked if the Buckfastleigh Foodbank has a restriction concerning the number of deliveries which can be received by each household?

Under normal conditions there is usually three deliveries that are offered to allow households time to receive benefit payments etc, but the team are now tailoring packages according to need and have set up an effective and efficient system for deliveries.

Members agreed that Dr Hodgins had provided an informative and helpful video to residents. Dr Hodgins has confirmed that the Emergency Response Team has contributed to keeping the residents of Buckfastleigh safe during the pandemic. It was agreed that the response not only helps those who are self-isolating but residents who are suffering from economic hardship. The service is providing more than just food and the delivery of prescriptions, it has helped with clothing, sourcing replacement electrical goods, signposting and legal advice to name but a few. There is also the check-in and chat team who have been helping to combat loneliness and anxiety by providing a friendly and reassuring voice.

The team continue to have capacity even though some of the volunteers are now returning to work or just need a break and training continues to be provided for new volunteers by Laura.

Tom Benson left the meeting at 8.00pm. Cllr Darren Greep and Kerry McCabe from the Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement Project (TRAYE) joined the meeting.

20/28. Proposal for a Youth Café:

The Town Council commissioned Young Devon to carry out a youth consultation in 2019 and develop a strategy for youth provision in the town. The first recommendation from this report is a youth wellbeing café. The Chair introduced Kerry from TRAYE who has submitted a proposal to the Council to facilitate a pilot youth café in Buckfastleigh. TRAYE already hosts regular youth club sessions with qualified youth workers in some of the rural communities around Totnes including Rattery and Staverton.

Kerry explained that an average of 12 young people attends each session who may not have the opportunity to access a youth service. Kerry would like to work with, and compliment the services already provided by the existing youth providers in the town and is keen to engage with the Bungalow Youth Project and Buckfastleigh Youth Club.

Cllr Barrett highlighted the need for this service when the coronavirus lockdown commenced in March and that the issue of governance can be difficult when working with other organisations. TRAYE already has an established structure and governance procedures in place.

Cllr Clarke: Young people are struggling not attending school and waiting for predicted grades without taking exams. This service is definitely needed in the town.

The proposal is initially for 6 months providing one virtual evening youth session per week with 1.5 hours face to face contact time with 2 youth workers and additional time for planning and debriefing. Sessions will be young people led and publicised through social media etc.

Cllr Barrett agreed to look at possible funding from the Town Council or another source to assist low income families accessing technology.

The project will have an initial review after 3 months and again towards the end of the 6 months pilot. The views of the young people who attend will be sought including setting up a youth café in one of the existing venues in the town. It is important that each session includes free food and refreshments such as hot chocolate, soup and snacks and although the focus will be providing a safe and secure environment where young people can discuss wellbeing and mental health issues it is also an opportunity to have fun.

There was concern as to how this initiative will fit with the existing youth providers in the town and not only the youth clubs but other organisations such as the football club and the scouts. Kerry assured Members that she will be liaising with all the organisations involved in providing youth activities with a view to working together and communicating effectively.

Cllr Barrett agreed that a youth café is a positive step and thanked Kerry for her enthusiasm and expertise.

Decision: The Chair asked Members to vote on the proposal with 8 votes in favour and 2 abstentions from Cllrs Cox and Greep. Motion carried.

20/29. To discuss and approve the response of Buckfastleigh Town Council to the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan Review:

Cllr Stokes gave a summary of the main points of the review. It is important that we have a healthy park with healthy habitats and that Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) works with local communities to achieve this. The review aims that the park should be carbon neutral but the park should strive to be net carbon positive. The plan is good but lacks detail.

DNPA has two statutory obligations: to enhance and preserve the park; and to encourage people to experience natural beauty. The plan is ambitious in tone but focuses on planning and farming and not the above obligations or the communities who live on the Moor. More positive statements and specific targets are needed with recognition of the people who call Dartmoor home. The Town Council would also like to see the establishment of a nature recovery area between Buckfastleigh and Ivybridge.

Generally, Members agreed with the review but felt it needed further work to take more positive steps in line with the recommendations of the Glover Report published in 2019.

The review focuses on the wild beauty and windswept landscape of Dartmoor, but this demonstrates a lack of biodiversity and is not the natural environment but the result of centuries of human activity such as overgrazing by sheep. What is the definition of beauty?

DNPA have proposed more wooded valleys, creation of peat bogs and managed grazing but there needs to be more specific plans for recovery. The Glover Report states that the roles of National Parks must change to protect these environments and to enrich and encourage biodiversity because land that is outside these protected areas are becoming impoverished. The Report also says that the National Parks should look at how subsidies are used to protect and enhance these outstanding landscapes. The nature of land management needs to change.

Decision: Members agreed that they are broadly in agreement with the draft review, but the response of the Town Council should include the points highlighted above. Draft response to be circulated for approval by Tuesday 26th May. Deadline for comments 31st May 2020.

20/30. Chairs announcements: No further matters to report.

20/31. Councillor updates regarding matters relevant to this meeting:

A question was raised concerning the involvement of the Dioceses in the emergency response to the coronavirus. Cllr Stokes confirmed that with respect to Buckfastleigh the Church has allowed St. Luke's Church as a venue and staff time, but this is a matter for each church to decide.

Cllr Greep advised that there is currently a delay with the creation of the community garden at the sports field due to the requirement to have an exemption licence to bring in bulk loads of soil.

20/32. Items requiring Urgent Attention: None

20/33. Summary of Key Messages:

- Community Emergency Response update.
- Proposal for a pilot virtual youth wellbeing café.
- Town Council response to the DNPA Management Plan Review.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.