

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting using the remote meeting service Zoom held on Wednesday 17th June 2020 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillors: Andy Stokes (Chair), Pam Barrett, Sue Clarke, Huw Cox, Kate Kayley, Sylvee Phillips and Judith Hart (Town Clerk)

In attendance: Cllr Sarah Parker-Khan (Teignbridge District Council), David Harbott (Be Wild), Mark Jefferies (Share Shed) and Mirella Ferraz (Network of Wellbeing)

Press: None

20/34. Apologies: Cllrs David Patrick, John Bailey, Ron Fox and Darren Greep

Cllrs Pamela Forbes and Gwena Harman did not give apologies.

20/35. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

20/36. To approve and sign the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 20th May 2020 and review actions from this meeting:

Actions from this meeting:

- The Clerk confirmed that she had circulated an email to explain that the value of a publicly owned asset must not change from year to year until disposal and the concept of depreciation is not appropriate.
- St. Luke's Church has been provided with mobile phones to support the Buckfastleigh Response team and reduce the cost of the telephone bill.

20/37. Questions and comments from the public:

Cllr Phillips raised a question from a member of the public concerning the maintenance of the verges, footpaths and a community compost facility.

Surveys of the verges within the parish were being conducted prior to lockdown by the Be Wild group. A verge management plan will be presented to the Town Council in the autumn. No suitable land has as yet been identified for a compost site and this initiative would need funding and volunteers to manage. This could be something that the volunteers creating a community garden at the sports field may wish to consider.

It was noted that some residents have cut back overgrown vegetation to the footpath behind Tweenaways but have no means of clearing away the cuttings.

Action: Clerk to confirm ownership of the footpath and ask the Parish Sweeper to remove the clippings.

Mark and Mirella gave an update concerning the mobile Share Shed and were pleased to announce that it will be launched during the first week of July. The Share Shed will be coming to Buckfastleigh on Saturday 4th July visiting the Football Club and Woodholme car or Victoria Park when permission is granted.

Action: Confirmation of locations and opening times to be advertised in due course.

David introduced the Buckfastleigh Swift Project working in collaboration with the Be Wild group. This is part of ongoing initiatives to welcome nature into people's lives and homes and recognise the divide between nature and culture, animals, and humans.

Swifts migrate annually from the Congo to Buckfastleigh and this was celebrated on Saturday 13th June with an event that included walks, craft activity packs and an art installation at The Living Room.

Swifts boxes will be made for the 2021 nesting season, but it was suggested that these should be installed now while the swifts are prospecting for new homes to return to before they leave for Africa.

The project is looking for sympathetic hosts for the nest boxes and would like the support of the Town Council to publicise.

Cllr Stokes agreed that a core group is needed to help make the swift boxes and that the group could apply for grant funding from the Town Council.

20/38. Questions to District and County Councillors:

Cllr Cox had attended a briefing at Teignbridge District Council (TDC) concerning post Covid-19 economic recovery. The worst-case scenario for TDC is predicted that it will be running at 75% of the capacity prior to lockdown by 2022. It will not just be the local authorities who will be struggling financially but also community groups who will need our support.

Cllr Parker-Khan advised that the predicted shortfall at TDC will be 6.9 million and that 2 million from Council reserves has been used to support the Covid-19 response.

TDC meetings have recommended that the rural ship service will not be reinstated until at least the end of July and discretionary grants for small and micro businesses are now available online. The deadline for the Teignbridge Plan Review consultation has been extended to 13th July 2020.

20/39. Budget Analysis Report 01.05.20 – 31.05.20: Noted

20/40. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.05.20 – 31.05.20: Noted

Cllr Stokes had been asked to provide an explanation concerning expenditure on the Covid-19 emergency. The Council's initial response in March was to ring-fence £20,000 to meet any unforeseen impacts of the pandemic. Demand for the variety of services offered by the Buckfastleigh Response Team continues and they will continue to provide support for as long as necessary. Having successfully obtained some small grants that were available and thanks to fundraising activity by members of the Response team, the Town Council has only spent £1,908 of this fund to date.

20/41. Sign and minute the Accounting Statement of the Annual Return 2019/20:

The Clerk was thanked for her work on the end of year accounts and the Accounting Statement was signed by the Chair and the Clerk.

20/42. To discuss the annual payment of rent to Buckfastleigh Town Hall and Institute Charity:

This matter was raised at the May meeting as to whether it would be appropriate for the Town Hall trustees to consider a rent holiday for the Town Council as a tenant of the Town Hall.

It was agreed that the Town Council has not vacated the building and staff are still visiting the premises, so this suggestion was not supported.

20/43. Buckfastleigh Covid-19 Community Emergency Response Update:

Now known as Buckfastleigh Response the volunteers still have capacity to continue with deliveries although there has been a slight decrease in the number of prescription deliveries as people return to work and go out. Demand for the Foodbank is expected to increase as the economic impact of the crisis hits with some furloughed employees losing their jobs.

Services will be reviewed in due course and the future of the group as a more sustainable organisation will be considered. People are still shielding, and it is likely that infection rates will rise again as lockdown measures are loosened. This crisis has highlighted the need to develop support for the elderly and vulnerable and Cllr Stokes expressed his hope that this initiative continues for years to come.

Cllr Barrett conveyed her thanks to all the volunteers and everyone who has made this community effort possible.

The response of the Town Council, St. Luke's Church and other community organisations was in place three weeks before any Government action was taken, and current services will continue as long as needed.

Cllr Parker-Khan advised that the community taxi for patient transport has been running since April providing approximately 200 trips to date mostly two-way which includes 62 journeys for Buckfastleigh residents. Demand is increasing and it is not known how this will be met. It has been suggested to involve the Buckfastleigh Sharing group as the service is currently dependent upon a very small number of volunteer drivers. Some requests are coming from outside the parishes of Ashburton and Buckfastleigh and key workers are also using the taxi when available due to the lack of public transport. Unfortunately, some people think it is a community taxi and more publicity is needed so the service is not abused.

20/44. Teignbridge Local Plan Consultation:

The deadline for comments has been extended to 13th July and it is important that the Town Council responds to the online questionnaire. Cllr Cox advised that this consultation refers to Part I of the plan which looks at matters such as building design, policies, biodiversity, and the future of town centres, it does not examine the allocation and development of sites.

Action: Cllrs Cox, Patrick and Clarke were nominated to discuss and draft a response to the questionnaire.

20/45. To discuss and approve the Buckfastleigh Youth Strategy:

Members were advised that Young Devon was commissioned in 2018 to write a youth strategy for Buckfastleigh in consultation with all the organisations who are involved with youth provision in the town. An example was given that if the Town Council chooses to commission an activity the strategy would be used as a template to demonstrate due diligence and the level of service the Council aspires to.

Cllr Cox felt that the document was incomplete and excluded other organisations in the parish.

It was confirmed by the Clerk that several consultation exercises were carried out by Young Devon which included meetings in the Town Hall and outreach work. All youth service providers in Buckfastleigh were invited to participate and their views were sought as to what a good service would look like and to identify the gaps left by cuts in funding. Young Devon makes various recommendations in the report one of which is a youth café.

Cllr Cox did not agree that this should be led by the Town Council and he was asked if he was acting as a Town Councillor or as a Trustee of The Bungalow at this meeting and whether he should declare a controlling interest as a trustee in this agenda item.

It was confirmed by the Chair that the Town Council does not wish to set up an independent youth service, but it would like to support and enhance existing provision with all organisations signing up to a partnership with shared standards. A strategy is also needed to support bids for external funding and the Town Council would like to work with the youth providers in the town to commission and deliver this service.

Cllr Clarke: The strategy is a mission statement as to what an excellent and quality youth service could look like.

The Chair moved the meeting to a vote to adopt the Youth Strategy which was seconded by Cllr Barrett. 3 members voted in favour of the proposal with 3 abstentions by Cllrs Cox, Kayley and Phillips. The Chair gave a casting vote in favour.

Decision: Motion resolved in favour of adopting the Buckfastleigh Youth Strategy.

20/46. Forward planning to 2021 – Initial discussion

Community consultations have highlighted the following:

- Environmental and food growing initiatives
- Supporting community groups with training
- Projects and activities to support the elderly
- Projects and activities to support young people

All of the above have been undertaken and are at different stages of development such as the Hello Summer programme now in its fourth year.

Councillors were asked to research community views and put forward new projects for the next meeting including their own. Thought must however be given to how a project will be achieved for eg. who will lead the project, what resources, land etc will be needed? Councillors were also asked to look at alternative ways of consulting with the community for 2021/22.

It was suggested that a short questionnaire is created and distributed to the Buckfastleigh Response volunteers to gauge the opinion of the clients with whom they currently have regular contact for eg. check-in-and-chat.

Action: Clerk to create a questionnaire for circulation.

20/47. Cycle South Dartmoor – Next Steps

Cycle South Dartmoor is a group that includes representatives from Ashburton, Buckfastleigh, South Brent and other interested parties working together to create a safe cycle path that links all three communities and beyond.

At a recent meeting the group looked at the provision of cycles, eBikes and free cycle training. Government funds have been made available to improve cycle routes and the report from Sustrans which was commissioned by the group is currently being examined.

20/48. Chairs announcements: No further matters to report.

20/49. Councillor updates regarding matters relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Barrett advised the meeting that she is currently looking at rolling out the Hello Summer programme to other communities following the success of this project in Buckfastleigh.

20/50. Items requiring Urgent Attention: None

20/51. Summary of Key Messages:

- Share Shed initiative coming to Buckfastleigh.

- Town Council expenditure on the Covid-19 crisis and Buckfastleigh Response update.
- TDC Local Plan consultation and encouraging residents to comment.
- Adoption of the new Youth Strategy.
- Looking to 2021 and seeking the views of the community.

The meeting closed at 8.56pm.