

# BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Town Council Meeting using the remote meeting service Zoom held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020 at 7.00 pm.**

**Present:** Councillors: Andy Stokes (Chair), Pam Barrett, John Bailey, Sue Clarke, Darren Greep, Kate Kayley, David Patrick, Sylvee Phillips and Judith Hart (Town Clerk)

**In attendance:** Malcolm Cowper (Chair of Buckfastleigh Primary School Governors) and Cllr Sarah Parker-Khan (Teignbridge District Council)

**Press:** None

**20/01. Apologies:** Cllrs Pamela Forbes and Ron Fox

Cllrs Huw Cox and Gwena Harman did not give apologies.

**20/02. Councillors invited to declare any interests:** None

**20/03. To amend the Standing Orders in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 to make provision for entirely electronic and validly held meetings (video conference, live webcast, live interactive streaming, etc) where the authority can make decisions.**

**Decision:** Standing Orders amended to incorporate the above legislation until such time as this legislation is revoked. Clerk to publish.

**20/04. To consider and agree protocol for the conduct of Town Council meetings held by remote access:**

**Decision:** Unanimously approved with amendments. Clerk to publish.

**20/05. To approve and sign the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and review actions from this meeting:**

**Actions from this meeting:**

- The Annual Town Meeting scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020 in accordance with the above legislation has been cancelled. It was also noted that the Annual Town Council Meeting will not be held and that the requirement to appoint a Chair has been removed until May 2021 although the Council may wish to appoint one earlier.

**20/06. To approve and sign the Minutes of the Buckfastleigh Matters Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and review actions from this meeting:**

**Actions from this meeting:**

- Cllr Greep to liaise with the Clerk regarding who to contact at Devon Highways about the blind corner at Hamlyn House.
- Planning application 20/00373 Bigadon Lodge, Buckfastleigh – support
- Response to the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan Review 2020-2025 – deadline for comments now extended to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020. Members agreed that the plan is more of a wish list and could be more ambitious with actual statements as to how the authority will take action to support the environment and the communities who live on the Moor. The views of the community should be sought, and residents encouraged to comment. Revised date to be circulated and Councillors to formulate a response.

- Presentation by Teign Energy deferred.
- Objection by the Town Council to proposed changes to the X38 timetable submitted and the creation of a list of what public transport is available in the town deferred.

**20/07. To approve and sign the Minutes of the Council Matters Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and review actions from this meeting:**

**Actions from these meetings:**

- Actions from the Council Matters Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> February covered under Minute No. 20/06

**Council Matters Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> March:**

- The Town Council agreed to lead a community emergency response to the coronavirus pandemic in partnership with St. Lukes Church and other partner organisations. It was unanimously agreed to ring-fence £20,000 of Council funds to support this.
- It was agreed to defer the Council Execution of documents to surrender the lease of Buckfast Village Hall by Buckfastleigh Town Council to the Buckfast Abbey Trustees.
- No other outstanding actions.

**20/08. Questions and comments from the public: None**

**20/09. Questions to District and County Councillors:**

Cllr Parker-Khan confirmed that following repeated requests and complaints including a letter from the Town Council, the portfolio holder and Executive Committee at Teignbridge District Council (TDC) will not suspend car parking charges. Although retaining car parking charges for Dawlish and Teignmouth as seaside resorts may be valid to deter to visitors, this blanket response is not applicable for communities such as Buckfastleigh where residents are either working at home, are furloughed or have lost their employment due to the effects of the pandemic.

Cllr Parker-Khan confirmed that use of TDC car parks has significantly dropped and that it would be useful to have examples of ticketing.

**Action:** Cllrs Greep and Patrick to ask residents for examples of parking tickets being issued via social media.

Cllr Stokes confirmed that he had sent letters to both Cllr Gordon Hook at Devon County Council (DCC) who to date has failed to reply and Mel Stride MP concerning the lack of support both at government and local level and how Buckfastleigh Town Council took the initiative to support our community long before any other measures were brought forward. He questioned the TDC response to the pandemic with reference to Tier 1 vulnerable residents who have been identified. No information has been forthcoming as to how many residents are receiving assistance which could help prevent the duplication of food deliveries. Cllr Stokes is only aware that four government food parcels have been received in Buckfastleigh.

Cllr Parker-Khan: The government tasked District Councils with food distribution which TDC delegated to Teignbridge CVS which was subsequently delegated to Devon Norse who are contracted by DCC to provide catering and cleaning services to schools etc. It is not known how need is identified or who is accountable at TDC.

Cllr Barrett: When was the decision made to remove all the TDC Councillors from the decision-making process? Essential information which effects the economy, the number of people infected by the virus etc cannot be withheld.

Cllr Parker-Khan: No meetings have taken place at TDC and I am not aware that a decision was taken to evoke emergency powers.

It was agreed that there appears to be an issue regarding legality and democracy. TDC have received funding from central government but there is no information as to how it will be used.

**20/10. Budget Analysis Reports 01.02.20 – 29.02.20 and 01.03.20 – 31.03.20:** Noted with two minor amendments to the March (end of year) report.

**20/11. Bank Payments Reports and Bank Statements 01.02.20 – 29.02.20 and 01.03.20 – 31.03.20:** Noted

Cllr Patrick asked for it to be recorded in the minutes that the Council thanks the Clerk for her persistence with the bank transfer which has not been a smooth process. The Clerk advised that her complaint to the new bank had been upheld.

**20/12. Quarterly Bank Reconciliation Report:** Noted

**20/13. Buckfastleigh Covid-19 Community Emergency Response Update:**

Cllr Stokes confirmed that the following actions have been undertaken by the Community Emergency Response Team over the past five weeks:

- Daily delivery of food parcels and prescriptions to the vulnerable and those who are self-isolating. Demand on the Buckfastleigh food bank has increased 7-fold.
- Helplines have been set up and manned by a rota of trained volunteers.
- Team leads have established a comprehensive set of policies and protocol such as infection control for volunteers delivering food and prescriptions.
- There has been a huge response from the community with more volunteers than currently needed.
- The Hello Spring and Hello Summer programme of activities has been activated to provide online activity sessions and deliver craft packs to children.
- A check-in and chat call log has been created to support the more vulnerable members of the community and well-being initiatives such as the delivery of books, Be Wild activities and a YouTube channel are being developed.

It is not known what the financial impact will be on Buckfastleigh. 11 new families have already sought help from the food bank due to job loss and it is likely that the community response will be needed until at least the school summer holidays. No exit strategy has been discussed yet.

Cllr Patrick: How are those who do not have access to social media being reached?

Two leaflet drops have been carried out and support is offered to those who are identified by the Medical Centre, W.I etc. The emergency response was initially for food and medication, but this has now expanded to include welfare. The demand for food is slowly increasing due to economic reasons and this is expected to continue.

Cllr Stokes thanked all the work undertaken by the Town Councillors, Council and Town Hall staff and the volunteers in addition to everyone who is a key worker such as NHS staff, care workers, delivery drivers, supermarket staff and the bin men.

#### **20/14. Chairs announcements:**

Cllr Stokes highlighted that the Town Council, St. Luke's Church, Ashburton Town Council, Ashburton and Buckfastleigh Community Care and our partner organisations have developed within a month a full system of support in the absence of any guidance or resources. He has sent a letter to Mel Stride MP to explain what has been achieved and to raise concerns regarding the lack of support or guidance for community volunteer efforts from government.

Cllr Stokes read the response received from Mel Stride which lists all the schemes set up and accessible on the government website. It was noted that there is no specific response to what has been achieved by local volunteer groups.

**Action:** Cllr Stokes to publish this correspondence.

#### **20/15. Councillor updates regarding matters relevant to this meeting:**

Cllr Bailey: Devon Air Ambulance is not running because the pilots cannot fly wearing PPE and social distancing cannot safely be adhered to.

It was noted that Dr Hodgins has raised concern regarding the impact on general health as less people are visiting GP practices. Early diagnosis of other illnesses such as cancer may be missed.

Cllr Clarke is currently looking at guidance concerning the use and wearing of construction masks as a substitute for medical masks.

There is a group in Buckfastleigh making 500 masks and 3D printing face shields.

Cllr Greep: The creation of a community garden at the sports field is progressing with the levelling of the site and delivery of topsoil.

There has however, not been any progress regarding the management and repair of the tennis courts.

#### **20/16. Items requiring Urgent Attention:**

Following the diversion along Plymouth Road/Strode Road due to the A38 resurfacing works it had been brought to the attention of the Clerk that many drivers are not observing the 40mph speed limit. This road is not safe during normal use, but with the increase in HGVs and delivery vehicles residents who are out walking and cycling as part of their daily exercise are at even greater risk.

**Action:** Clerk to contact the portfolio holder at DCC and Highways England to highlight the issue.

Cllr Stokes has received some complaints regarding shared access, blocked private alleyways and lack of social distancing which is causing friction between some neighbours.

Playgrounds must remain closed due to the risk of cross infection from touching hard surfaces. Victoria Park must continue to remain shut for this reason.

Cllr Patrick advised that the flood monitoring camera on the river Mardle has stopped working again and that he will arrange access with the landowner for repair. It has been agreed that the camera needs to be moved to another location with easier access.

Cllr Phillips asked if the number of deaths and rate of infection in the parish is known?

Cllr Stokes confirmed that he is aware of 1 death and possibly 30 individuals presenting Covid-19 symptoms, but as there is no testing in the community it is difficult to provide an accurate figure. It is also not known whether we have reached the peak of reported deaths and if the current rules are relaxed another wave of infection may take hold.

Cllr Greep asked if any arrangements had been made for exercise sessions such as individual body weight training around the cricket pitch?

Cllr Barrett explained that as all green spaces which have equipment are closed home and garden exercises are being devised.

**20/17. Summary of Key Messages:**

- Community Emergency Response update.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.