

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 19th November 2025 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: Sue Clarke (Chair), Paul Georghiades, Steven Burch, Joanna De Groot-Marzec, Ron Fox and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

In attendance: Cllr Stuart Rogers (Teignbridge District Council and Devon County Council) and Cllr Jack Major (Teignbridge District Council), Becci Eriksson (Be Buckfastleigh), Phil Northcott (Victoria Park) and 3 members of the public regarding 3 of the 4 grant applications

The Chair asked Cllr Major to note that residents are questioning Cllr John Nutley's consistent lack of attendance at Buckfastleigh Town Council meetings.

Cllr Ben Leaney arrived at 9.25pm

Press: None

25/135. Apologies for absence: Cllrs John Bailey and Sylvie Phillips (Buckfastleigh Town Council)

Councillors invited to declare any interests:

Cllrs Sue Clarke and Ron Fox as Victoria Park trustees with respect to the annual report presented by Phil Northcott.

25/136. To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 17th September 2025 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes signed by Cllr Paul Georghiades.

Actions: No actions to discuss

25/137. Cybercrime Awareness session hosted by Mike Harrison, Devon and Cornwall Police Cyber Protect Officer:

Mike Harrison gave an informative and interesting presentation regarding how the public, businesses and charities can protect themselves from scams, phishing and cyber attacks including how we choose, store and use our passwords and online identity. Most importantly Mike highlighted the need not to rush, question everything, seek advice, never assume and always confirm before clicking on any links or downloading files from emails or messages where you are not completely sure of the source and if in doubt delete.

25/138. Questions and comments from the public: None

25/139. To consider four smaller grant applications:

Dungeons and Dragons Club – Vicky Narewski Scullion explained that the weekly club hosted at The Bungalow continues to be well attended with a waiting list. This type of activity is not always accessible and is particularly popular with neurodivergent young people who may struggle with mainstream interests such as sport. Parent/carer testimonials provided with this application highlight the popularity and success of this club.

Wintertide – Zoe Ellison gave a brief synopsis about the request for funding towards creative

children's activities in the primary school as part of the Wintertide festival which is likely to attract between 3,500 and 5,000 visitors. The event continues to grow and incorporate as many local businesses as possible to increase footfall and benefit the economy of the town.

Buckfastleigh Bowling Club – Tom Bowden, secretary and treasurer of the club highlighted that membership has slightly decreased but is open to all ages and abilities. The quality of the green is poor, and club members agreed to undertake a programme of ongoing work to be completed over 5 years to improve the condition of the grass. It is hoped that this will increase membership and encourage other clubs to visit.

It was noted that Teignbridge District Council (TDC) ceased paying an annual grant of £4,000 to the club in 2018 which has had a significant impact on finances although their lease with TDC is only £168.00pa.

Buckfastleigh After School Club at Moor Imagination Collective – no representation following invitation to this meeting and confirmation of attendance.

The Chair invited Phil Northcott to speak first due to the length of time he had waited.

25/140. Annual report for Victoria Park and Swimming Pool by the Treasurer for the Victoria Park Charity:

Phil Northcott, Victoria Park and swimming pool treasurer explained that £45,000 has been spent on maintenance and repairs over the past 5 years including work to the changing cubicles, new pumps for the pool and an inventory of the trees in the park. Both facilities are expensive to run on top of general maintenance. He thanked the Town Council for the continued financial support to keep the pool open.

Phil was pleased to report however that a new energy provider has been sourced which should reduce their bill by £7,000pa. The trustees however must continue to fundraise as the pool is still running at a loss and the £6.00 ticket price for a swim does not meet the actual cost of £14.00 in real terms.

A grant application will be submitted to the South Brent Energy Company for the installation of solar panels, and they have applied to the Ashburton and Buckfastleigh Hospital League of Friends for funding towards life-saving courses.

Income is steady and footfall for the 2025 season was 9,000 to 10,000 due to the good weather. Hello Summer activities in the park and pool provided a profit of £2,600 and there is additional income from training, swimming lessons and private hire.

The Chair thanked Phil for his comprehensive report.

25/141. End of year report for Hello Summer youth activities programme with representation from Better Places – Be Buckfastleigh:

Becci Eriksson reported that Hello Summer had an excellent summer due to the good weather with high attendance. Activities were mostly held in the park and pool and there was positive feedback from both the young people and their parents/carers.

Hello Summer is dependent upon the funding provided by the Town Council and Holiday Activities and Food Funding (HAF), the latter of which is for the whole of Devon. The funding provided by the Council ensures that activities are inclusive without any stigma for HAF funded children.

This summer there were 16 days of activities with further sessions at Easter, Christmas etc. 90% of the children were from low income families in Buckfastleigh.

Becci acknowledged that this initiative was started by the Town Council with Be Buckfastleigh commissioned to continue this service. It is the envy of other towns and provides a sense of wellbeing and community cohesion.

Although Be Buckfastleigh has lost its premises and some staff it continues to run its 3 core projects: Hello Summer, Little Lambs early years play group in St. Luke's Church and the weekly Social Supermarket in the Town Hall. All activities are now volunteer led due to financial constraints.

Hello Summer pre-planning and booking requires a lot of time and work but fortunately is covered due to HAF funding, it is not known how long this will continue. Becci is waiting to hear if HAF money will be available for 2026 from the Government.

A Christmas activity day will be held in the Town Hall on Tuesday 23rd December and some HAF funded hampers will be available at the Social Supermarket.

Becci thanked the Town Council for its continued support.

25/142. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Major updated Members concerning recent activities at TDC such as the Cost of Living event held at Heathfield and a grant for £2,500 awarded to The Bungalow for their cooking project.

Cllr Clarke explained that the information concerning the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds held by TDC has been conflicting with confirmation that CIL funds are held by TDC and not Government. There has still been no transparency regarding how this money is accounted for or if it accrues interest.

Cllr Rogers: TDC Overview and Scrutiny committee have agreed an action to work with Dartmoor National Park regarding the communities within Dartmoor who do not receive CIL.

Cllr Rogers has arranged a free land survey of the proposed site for the scout hut as it is important to know what lies underground and a local builder will provide options once the contents of the survey is known.

Residents have enquired about the progress of the proposed housing development at Barn Park but as yet there is no further news.

Devon Highways will be providing some mobile speed cameras along Strode Road following complaints about speeding and the Highway and Traffic Orders Committee (HATOC) will meet in the New Year to review the ongoing parking problems in the town.

Repairs to Buckfast Road will be undertaken in 2026/27 following numerous reports of potholes and a poor road surface.

Cllr Rogers has awarded £500 from his Councillors Community Fund to the Town Council as a contribution to the free Christmas meals. He also raised concern about how many children living in foster care are being split up and moved to accommodation outside of the county. The Town Hall has already been offered as a venue for a foster carer's recruitment drive.

Cllr Burch left the meeting at 9.00pm.

25/143. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:

None

25/144. To review the Police Reports for September and October 2025:

Noted

25/145. Local Government Reorganisation Update and Budget/Precept implications:

The Clerk advised the meeting that members of the Finance Committee held on 18th November discussed 3 options for the 2026/27 budget and precept which will be brought to December Full Council. Due to the proposed asset transfers under Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the financial pressure this will place on the Town Council which already has limited resources, some tough choices will be needed including the suggestion to reduce the amount of grant funding available.

Unfortunately, despite requests no costs regarding the Woodholme car park toilets have been provided which has made it difficult for the Clerk to estimate how much is needed to take on the running, staffing and maintenance of the toilets should this be transferred to the Town Council in 2027.

25/146. To receive the Teignbridge Citizens Advice Buckfastleigh Outreach Activity Report July to September 2025:

Report deferred to the next meeting.

25/147. To approve retrospectively the expenditure limit to the Town Council corporate purchasing card as agreed by email on 8th October 2025.

The Clerk explained that many purchases on behalf of the Town Council can only be made online using a credit card which has been highlighted by recent expenditure for the new community cinema.

Resolved: Members approved unanimously and retrospectively to increase the spending limit on the credit card administered by the Town Clerk to £1,000.

25/148. Budget Analysis Reports 01.09.25 – 31.10.25:

Noted.

25/149. Bank Payments Reports and Bank Statements 01.09.25 – 31.10.25:

Noted.

25/150. Multi-Pay Card Statements July 2025 to September 2025:

Noted

25/151. Quarterly Bank Reconciliation July 2025 to September 2025:

Noted and signed by the Chair.

25/152. Chairs Announcements.

No matters to report.

25/153. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting.

The Chair attended the Remembrance Sunday services which were hampered by the torrential rain. She has also met with representatives of the Schumacher College previously based in Dartington regarding their interest in the Rill Estate, Buckfastleigh.

25/154. Items requiring urgent attention.

None

25/155. Summary of Key Messages

Clerk to action.

25/156. Motion to move into a Part II (private) session to discuss items of confidential business in accordance with Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Meeting moved to Part II

To resolve all grant application decisions received under Agenda Item No. 5. Minute No. 25/139:

Meeting returned to Part I

The following smaller grant awards were approved:

Dungeons and Dragons Club - £500 agreed towards running costs.

Wintertide - £480 toward children's activities in Buckfastleigh Primary School as part of the Wintertide event.

Actions: Clerk to confirm in writing. Unsuccessful applications to be invited to the January Town Council meeting should they wish to pursue their applications further.

Meeting closed at 9.50pm