

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 17th September 2025 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: Paul Georghiades (Deputy Chair), John Bailey, Steven Burch, Joanna De Groot-Marzec, Ben Leaney and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

In attendance: Cllr Stuart Rogers (Teignbridge District Council and Devon County Council) arrived at 7.30pm, and Rachel Bastyan on behalf of Moorland Community Caring.

Press: None

25/118. Apologies for absence: Cllrs Sue Clarke (Chair), Ron Fox, Sylvee Phillips (Buckfastleigh Town Council), Jack Major and John Nutley (Teignbridge District Council)

Councillors invited to declare any interests: Cllr De Groot-Marzec expressed an interest in both grant applications under Agenda Item No. 5.

25/119. To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 20th August 2025 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes signed by Cllr Paul Georghiades.

Actions: The Clerk has emailed Teignbridge Citizens Advice to confirm the continued financial support of the Town Council and that if feasible we would welcome the current one day a week service increased to 3 days to include Ashburton and the surrounding Moorland communities if they too make some financial contribution.

25/120. To receive the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 10th September 2025 and resolved the following recommendations:

- Minute No. 25/20. Initial budget discussion pending public consultation:

Members agreed to devote the October full Council meeting for public consultation prior to discussing the 2026/27 budget from 3.00pm to 8.00pm with a PowerPoint presentation, refreshments and cakes in the Town Hall.

- Minute No. 25/21. To review the Clerk's spending limit:

The request from the Town Clerk to increase her spending limit from £2,500 to £4,000 to cover the rising costs of day-to-day expenditure was approved unanimously.

Action: Clerk to action

25/121. Questions and comments from the public: None

25/122. To consider one smaller grant and resolve the recommendation from the September Finance Committee regarding one larger grant application:

Buckfastleigh Moor Social - Rachel Bastyan gave a summary of what Moorland Community Caring provides to residents who are over 50 years. This application for £500 is to support the running costs of Buckfastleigh Moor Social which meets bi-monthly at The Globe and provides an organised social activity for those who are socially isolated or unwell and provides transport

for those who would normally be unable to attend.

Cllr Georghiades explained that it would be helpful for the assessment of any future applications that the actual costs of running this activity are identified and isolated from the overall costs of the umbrella organisation.

Rachel Bastyan left the meeting.

Buckfastleigh Christmas Fair - Members of the Finance Committee recommended to this meeting to support two larger grant applications for £1,300 towards the total running costs of £4,200 to include security, first aid, road closure and insurance and £2,000 towards the cost of hiring a children's toy ride and traditional fairground activity stall.

Members acknowledged the importance of this annual event to the community, businesses and visitors.

The Chair moved the meeting to Agenda No. 7

25/123. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:

Members noted that additional reports have been uploaded to the Dartmoor National Park planning portal with respect to the Timbers Road planning application for circa 75 dwellings, but no further comment is required as concerns were already addressed in the Town Council response now published.

It was noted that Michael Fife Cook as a member of the National Park Development Management Committee will be meeting with Barn Park residents to listen to their concerns about the Barn Park planning application for 28 dwellings.

25/124. To review the Police Report for August 2025:

Noted

25/125. Future funding and management of community defibrillators:

The Clerk explained that the Chapel Street defibrillator has been the sole responsibility of the Town Council following fundraising by the Buckfastleigh W.I, but the other 3 defibrillators at Grange Road, Buckfast, the Football Club and Glebelands had been initiated by the local fire service with the Town Council ordering and paying for consumables. This agreement has now come to an end with all equipment reaching end of life including the recent replacement of the Football Club defibrillator. The fire service will continue to monitor but the current defibrillator budget will need to be increased for 2026/27.

25/126. English Devolution White Paper Update:

The second bid to the Government UK Shared Prosperity Fund on behalf of Buckfastleigh for a new community cinema in the Town Hall has been successful. Again, the application was subject to strict criteria with a limited timeframe to submit. The future success of this project will however depend on the recruitment of volunteers and the support of the community.

Currently there is some debate concerning the choice of name due to copyright.

Cllr Burch confirmed that thanks to Cllr De Groot-Marzec the Town Council is also registered with Film England as a preferred location for filming.

The Chair returned the meeting to Agenda No. 6

25/127. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

Questions from the public who are unable to attend this meeting:

- How and to whom can a resident make a complaint about a NHS service?
- If the Digital Inclusion Service is an initiative run on behalf of or in partnership with the NHS so that patients have better access to online information and how to use technology to make appointments, order prescriptions etc, why have they approached the Town Council because Buckfastleigh, Ashburton and South Brent surgeries do not have the capacity or resources? Why do they feel that this should be facilitated by an unrelated and under-resourced organisation?

Questions from the Chair to Cllr Rogers in her absence:

- Is there an update regarding the unspent Community Infrastructure Levy held by Teignbridge District Council (TDC)?
- Why has there been no response to Cllr Clarke's Freedom of Information request which was submitted nearly 6 weeks ago regarding car parks revenue?

Cllr Rogers will be meeting Devon County Cllr Dan Thomas, Cabinet Member for Highways regarding the '20 is Plenty' campaign and the Highways Officer is chasing drain clearance in Buckfastleigh including the Plymouth Road area.

Devon County Council (DCC) will be subject to a core quality inspection this autumn for adult and social care.

The Devolution process has been affected by the recent change of Government ministers. DCC have had a briefing to this effect and need to submit their bid by November. There are 416 Town and Parish Councils in Devon, how will this be managed under local government reorganisation and will some of the parishes have to combine? What will happen to all the councillors and clerks? Central government is trying to implement a metropolitan policy in rural areas. Some residents are digitally excluded too.

Will the debt owed by DCC be written off? This is not being addressed. How will devolution affect the Council Tax as residents cannot continue to absorb these increases. Cllr Rogers will be asking for a meeting with other rural members.

Cllr Georghiades: If TDC are offloading assets to the towns and parishes how can they justify the same rate of council tax, this is double taxation?

Cllr Burch: Is the TDC 2019 assets transfer policy still current?

Cllr De Groot-Marzec: People with memory loss or dementia cannot use technology and may not have a support network to help them access it.

25/128. Budget Analysis Report 01.08.25 – 31.08.25:

Noted.

25/129. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.08.25 – 31.08.25:

Noted.

25/130. Chairs Announcements.

No matters to report.

25/131. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting.

Cllr Bailey was pleased to report that following the work to the football club changing rooms helped by the Town Council grant, clubs with younger players are now using the facilities.

25/132. Items requiring urgent attention.

None

25/133. Summary of Key Messages

Clerk to action.

25/134. 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 discuss the larger and smaller grants as detailed under Minute No. 25/122 and note the minutes of the Personnel Meeting held on 10th September 2025.

Cllr Rogers left the meeting.

The meeting returned to Part I

Larger Grant decision:

Buckfastleigh Christmas Fair – Members agreed to award £1,300 towards running costs and £2,000 towards the fairground ride and stall.

Smaller Grant decision:

Moorland Community Caring - £500 agreed, but Cllr Georgiades asked why the Buckfastleigh Moor Social project was set up knowing that they had no funding to sustain it?

Actions: Clerk to confirm in writing.

Meeting closed at 8.57pm