

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held in Room 3 at the Town Hall on Wednesday 13th December 2017 at 7:30pm

Present: Pam Barrett (Chair), Janet Jones, Simon Rines, Andy Stokes, Pamela Forbes, Ron Fox, Linus McCloskey, Greg Porter, Dan Simpson, and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

Press: No press in attendance.

In attendance: Cllrs Stuart Barker (County & District) and John Nutley (District) and 2 members of the public

Part I (Open to the Public)

17/142. Apologies: Cllrs Neil Smith and Mark Maish

17/143. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

17/144. To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 8th November 2017:

Signed and approved by Cllr. Pam Barrett

17/145. Questions raised by the Public:

2 members of the public expressed concern regarding the installation of new double yellow lines at Jordan Street which they believe have made the road more dangerous by encouraging cars to speed. There is no pavement and previously, parked cars had slowed down the traffic.

Cllr Andy Stokes: Are traffic calming measures such as speed bumps needed?

The Chair explained that many opinions have been expressed on this subject. Some residents have complained that there is nowhere to park and that there are too many cars on Jordan Street. Local farmers, emergency vehicles and larger vehicles often experience restricted access and it was noted that the new lines were requested by some of the Jordan Street residents, but these need to be longer to include the pinch point. The Town Council is aware that there are numerous highways issues, but does not know how these can be resolved.

Cllr Stuart Barker was asked to highlight these concerns to Devon County Council (DCC) Highways department.

Cllr Barker agreed that Jordan Street has always been a problem, particularly regarding access for fire engines. He acknowledged that an error has been made by the contractor, so the recent work was not completed. Cllr Barker confirmed that officers will return to look at the issues. The installation of speed bumps may be one solution and it is essential to have a 3m width for lorries. Many vehicles and properties have been damaged in this area due to restricted access.

Cllr Pam Barrett: This situation will get worse with the proposed new housing developments at Barn Park and Holne Road.

Cllr Stuart Barker: Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) did consider the highways issues when allocating these sites in the Local Plan.

Cllr Pam Barrett: We would hope that Highways will look at this issue when applications are submitted for the new housing developments.

Cllr Stuart Barker advised that the issues which have been raised have led to the introduction of yellow lines, but he agreed to look at the possibility of traffic calming measures with the Highways Officer.

A member of the public referred to a neighbour's accident which was caused by a speeding car which took off her car door and expressed concern about the safety and speed of vehicles using Jordan Street.

Cllr Pam Barrett: The public must continue to report incidents to the police. There is now a whole set of issues and concerns that relate to the lack of a local police officer in the town. Members of the public are invited to attend the January Planning, Environment and Transport meeting when car parking problems around the parish will be an agenda item.

17/146. Police report:

The Police report for November had been circulated to Members prior to this meeting and will be published on the Town Council website for information.

17/147. Reports from County Councillor and District Councillors:

Cllr Barker: The government is reviewing 20 mph speed limits and DCC will examine its policies once this review is completed in 2018. DCC is applying for extra powers, which are currently carried out by the police, for civil enforcement officers and this will include measures to combat speeding. A consultation will be carried out and the opinion of the Town Council will be sought in the New Year. County Highways are also examining visual splay areas, for e.g. where transit vans park on junctions restricting the view of a driver and subsequently causing an accident.

Members agreed that there is not enough parking and double yellow lines just push parking problems to other areas of the parish. It is essential that a joined-up approach between DCC and Teignbridge District Council (TDC) is adopted.

Cllr Stuart Barker: There is currently no liaison between the two authorities as they are operating under different systems.

Cllr John Nutley: TDC formed a car-parking sub-committee two years ago. TDC have had to change the parking meters in the car parks for a second time at a cost of £5,000 per machine. It was found that the first batch of new machines created long queues while people had to use number plate details in order to obtain a ticket. TDC have now reverted to the original system.

17/148. To receive the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 22nd November 2017: Noted.

To resolve the following recommendations from Minute Nos:

17/48. Application for funding from Buckfastleigh Community Care. Resolved. Clerk to submit to the Elector Fund.

17/52. Application for a grant for £1,050.00 from West Devon Arts Workshop. Resolved

17/56. Community Infrastructure Levy payment. Resolved.

17/149. To receive the minutes of the Planning, Environment and Transport Committee held on 6th December 2017: Noted

Whitecleave Quarry update – An extension for comments by the Town Council to planning application no. DCC/4032/2017 has been agreed until mid-January. The response to the Stage 2 complaint has however, been deferred by the DCC Complaints Dept. Members agreed that the response to the complaint will influence the Council's comments to the planning application and as this application will not be determined by the Development Management Committee until March 2018, the Town Council would like to defer any comments until the Stage 2 response has been received.

Cllr Barker confirmed that DCC are in breach as the quarry operator currently has no planning permission to continue to remain on the site.

Cllr Simon Rines: No significant action has been taken on the breaches, with or without planning permission. 36 notices have been issued by DCC and the only one which is defective is for Whitecleave Quarry. The operator has a history of breaching planning conditions on this site and DCC has never upheld any of the Council's complaints.

It was noted that the operator will be moving all three businesses to the one site in Heathfield.

Action: Clerk to request a further extension for comment by the Town Council from the planning authority until the Stage 2 response is received in the New Year.

The Town Council has no confidence in the competence of DCC planning officers and requested support from Cllr Barker on this matter. Cllr Barker explained that he cannot be involved in this and due HR process will have to be followed.

17/150. To discuss the future of the Planning, Environment and Transport Committee referred from the meeting held on 6th December 2017:

Cllr Pam Barrett observed that the relevance of the Council planning committee is in doubt when the planning authorities fail to consider the Council's recommendations and observations regarding planning applications. This committee appears to have no power or influence and proposes its abolition.

Cllr Janet Jones did not support this proposal as she believes it is important to represent planning applications and the opinions of the public. Other issues are also addressed at these meetings. Members agreed that the remit of this committee has changed, and a wider range of issues are discussed, but to refer to it as planning committee is misleading as it has no influence over planning applications. It is felt that consultations simply justify the decisions of the planning authorities and are more of a 'tick box' exercise.

Applications that are of greater relevance to the community already go to full Council.

Cllr Simon Rines proposed a vote of no confidence in the planning authorities.

Decisions regarding the Devonia site were given as an example of how DNPA have allowed piecemeal development which has scuppered their own plans for a master plan. Repeated objections by the Town Council have been disregarded with the implication that decisions have already been made. The previous Director of Planning admitted that DNPA had made a mistake regarding this site. The Chair advised that she has spoken to other town and parish councils, some of whom have abolished their planning committees.

Cllr Stuart Barker: A site owner can make the decision not to be involved in a master plan and the consent of the landowner is essential.

Cllr Pam Barrett: Further greenfield sites are now being looked at by the planning authority. Why does DNPA not have a master plan for Devonia? Why do they prefer to develop greenfield to brownfield sites? The Council can no longer pretend to be a decision maker for planning.

Cllr Andy Stokes proposed that the Planning Committee is replaced with an Environment and Transport Committee.

Cllr John Nutley explained the process adopted by Ashburton Town Council which Members agreed is not dissimilar to Buckfastleigh.

It was highlighted that over £50,000 was raised to fund the Whitecleave Quarry planning appeal and a considerable amount of time and effort was provided by volunteers leading to the rejection of the application by the planning inspector.

Cllr Barrett suggested the possibility of banding together with other communities to have a dedicated planning officer to represent the views of the community.

Decision: Cllr Andy Stokes proposed to disband the current Town Council planning committee and replace this with the Environment and Transport Committee which was seconded by Cllr Greg Porter with all Members in favour. Cllr Janet Jones abstained from voting.

Action: Cllr Stokes to issue a statement to the press and community to this effect.

Cllr Rines: It is important to stress that the Town Council's main recommendations were substantiated at Devonia and Whitecleave Quarry.

Action: Terms of reference to be discussed further at the January planning meeting with a view to a revised committee starting in February 2018.

17/151. Town Council Projects Update: No matters to report.

17/152. Draft Budget and Precept 2018/19:

Members agreed that it is important to roll over projects from the 2017/18 budget except for the Devon Air Ambulance community landing site which is now complete and the installation of the solar panels to the swimming pool which should be completed by the end of the current financial year. It has been suggested that these funds should be retained and used for a more comprehensive youth activities programme in 2018/19 and to introduce a new budget for culture and events. Members also agreed to increase the budget for staff to deliver the services now provided by the Town Council.

The national rate of inflation currently stands at around 3%, but to compensate the loss of part of the Council Tax Support Grant, a slightly above inflation rate at 3.72% rise to the Council Tax contribution to the Town Council is proposed which would increase the precept from £128,111 to £136,194 for 2018/19.

Decision: Cllr Andy Stokes proposed the above increase to the 2018/19 budget which was seconded by Cllr Pam Barrett with all Members in favour.

The Town Clerk was thanked for her work on the budget.

17/153. Planning Application - DCC/4032/2017 for continued temporary use of offices, workshop and storage detailed in planning permission 15/01695/DCC at Whitecleave Quarry, Plymouth Road, Buckfastleigh until 31st July 2018:

Deferred pending further extension request to the planning authority.

17/154. To discuss the planning, management and communication issues for projects which are within the remit of this committee:

Following the decision of the planning committee to dissolve the Planning, Environment and Transport Committee in its current form, it was agreed that a statement should be issued to this effect on behalf of the Town Council.

Action: Cllr Andy Stokes to circulate a statement for approval by Members for distribution to the press.

17/155. Chair's Announcements:

It was noted that Cllr Fanny Jackson has resigned from the Town Council and that the statutory notice of a casual vacancy will be served on 2nd January 2018 by the Clerk.

Cllr Pam Barrett reported that the training for community groups has been well received, but the trainer is now moving out of the area. There is a need to review this project as some of the main

groups and organisations in town have not attended these sessions. A “Freshers Fair” is planned for Saturday 10th March which will be a networking event and showcase for local groups to encourage volunteer recruitment and participation. The Chair also suggested that the Town Council could introduce a community volunteer recognition scheme.

17/156. Clerk’s Announcements: None

17/157. Correspondence:

A quarterly report from the Town Ranger was summarised and it was agreed that this should be published on social media etc.

Thank you letters were received from the following organisations and noted :-

Rotary Club of Ashburton and Buckfastleigh – support for the Purple4Polio project and the planting of purple crocus corms around the parish by the Town Ranger and volunteers.

Trefor Jones – Town Council grant towards a funding event to support the Family Worker based at St. Luke’s Church.

Buckfast Village Hall Committee – Town Council grant towards flood prevention and pedestrian safety work in the hall car park.

17/158. Reports from other meetings and working parties attended by Members:

The Clerk confirmed that the minutes from the meeting of the Teignbridge Association of Local Councils attended by Cllr Janet Jones had been circulated. Cllr Jones had also attended a community-led affordable housing event and a Friends of Ashburton and Buckfastleigh Hospital meeting.

It was noted that TDC will be hosting an affordable housing event for Buckfastleigh in 2018.

Cllr Linus McCloskey provided a report on behalf of the Citizens Advice outreach service in Buckfastleigh which demonstrated that £119,722 in additional income was generated from April to November 2017. The Council thanked Cllr McCloskey for his work within the community.

Cllr Simon Rines pointed out that it is not just financial help provided by this service, but other advice such as legal issues.

Cllr Andy Stokes advised that there may be possible funding available for the proposed river Dart hydropower initiative following a meeting with the Devon Association of Renewable Energy.

The Sustrans feasibility study for the proposed A38 corridor cycle route has been reviewed and revised appendices are being prepared.

Cllr Simon Rines reported that mediation is taking place with the Bungalow Youth Project, but no further progress has been made.

17/159. Urgent Items: None.

The meeting closed at 10.00pm

Signed Date.....