

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WEDNESDAY 18 APRIL 2018

A REVIEW OF THE YEAR AND FUTURE PLANS

The past 12 months have been extremely busy during which time we have welcomed a new Councillor, Huw Cox and two new part-time members of staff, Matt McLeod for the newly created position of Town Ranger and Inga Page as an Administrative Assistant to support Judith, our Town Clerk.

We asked the community what they would like to see happen during 2017/18 and they identified 8 key projects which I am very pleased to say we were able to deliver during the past year. These were:

- **Things for kids to do** – We devised, funded and ran our “**Hello Summer**” programme of free children’s activities during the school holidays. There was a free activity every week day over summer ranging from bouncy castles to cookery classes, mural painting to circus skills and song writing to whittling. We also ran some Halloween themed arts and craft activity over autumn. We received very positive feedback from the parents and children who participated, and we plan to run an even wider range of activities during 2018. We are working with Play Torbay to organise some fun day trips and, thanks to additional grant funding, we will also be looking to develop some youth outreach work to support our young people in the community.
- **Taking care of our town** - Matt, our **Town Ranger** has been in his role for over 9 months now and demand for this service is high. Matt’s responsibilities range from reporting highway matters to Devon County Council, creating an anti-dog poo campaign, planting crocuses and maintaining Town Council street furniture to participating in flood and emergency training exercises to help with community resilience.
- **Advice and support** – We are very proud to support and fund a **Citizen’s Advice** outreach worker at the Buckfastleigh Medical Centre which has already generated over £119,000 of additional benefit payments for residents from April to November 2017. We thank and congratulate Councillor Linus McCloskey for this voluntary work within our community.
- **Keeping our park and pool running** – Victoria Park trustees have raised over £300,000 to repair the swimming pool and complete the new play area which opened at the start of 2017/18. This project was one of our Towns key priorities in the Neighbourhood Plan and the Town Council have picked up part of the annual running cost following Teignbridge Council’s decision to remove funding. The funding helps keep swimming prices affordable for local schools, young people and residents.

- **An Air Ambulance night landing site** – New floodlights at the football pitch were installed in October 2017 and we are aware that Devon Air Ambulance have already used the site on several occasions, helping local residents access emergency medical care much more quickly and potentially saving lives. Of course, the football club also have some nice new floodlights to use too! Many thanks to John Bailey at the football club for helping us manage this project and also to Buckfast Abbey who contributed generously to the installation.
- **Greener and cheaper energy** - The installation of **solar panels** to community buildings has run into a few technical difficulties which we are working to resolve. Allocated funds will be ring-fenced to ensure that this project is completed within the next 12 months.
- **Funding out community space** - The Town Council has supported the **Town Hall** since 1952 and it is acknowledged that this is a valued community venue used for a wide range of activities and events which also accommodates the library, Council offices and popular community cinema. We have provided a contribution to the annual running costs to ensure that the building can remain open. However, it is likely that substantial investment is required to bring it up modern standards, meet the necessary regulations and continue to meet the needs of the community.
- **Funding community development** - Our **Community Development Fund grant programme** has been used to support a variety of groups and organisations who operate for the benefit of the town and we will continue to review and develop our range of grant funding activity. We have also provided specialist training to our community groups to better equip them in their roles.

Other initiatives and activities which have been supported and funded by the Town Council have included the **Sports Festival** with our first visit from **Colourscape**, various community gatherings and celebrations including the **Christmas Day meal at Buckfast Abbey** and equipment for the town hall to run the **community cinema**.

Looking ahead

We want to work in partnership with local groups to make sure our town has the things it needs to flourish and thrive. We asked the community what they would like to see us develop and they said we should:

- look to provide more services, activities and support for our young people **and** our older people. We should continue to provide more things to do for all age groups, help tackle loneliness and social isolation and develop a stronger more engaged community.
- work with local people to develop a community approach to arts, crafts and music and also to initiatives around food growing, planting, composting, allotments, orchards and food.

- provide more training and support to existing community groups to help them develop and grow, write business plans and secure external funding.

To do this, we have agreed that we will continue to support our ongoing projects and develop a more strategic community approach to help us secure significant additional external grant funding for 2019/20 onwards. We will be working with external fundraisers to help us develop this approach during 2018/19.

In the more immediate future, we will be hosting the new **Heart of Buckfastleigh** event on Saturday 16th June which will be an opportunity for our local groups and organisations to network, promote their activities, recruit new volunteers and celebrate the hard work and contribution of residents in our community with an awards presentation.

I would like to thank everyone who has played a part in helping us deliver this incredible amount of new activity during the past year. I know that it has been a very ambitious and challenging year, but I think we can all be very proud of what we have been able to achieve together. Special thanks, of course, go to our teams, Judith, Inge and Matt on the Town Council side, Clair, Kiki and Mike at the Town Hall.

Councillor Pam Barrett, Mayor of Buckfastleigh