

# BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Council Matters Meeting held in Room 3 at the Town Hall on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at 7.30 pm.**

**Present:** Councillors: Andy Stokes (Chair), Pam Barrett, John Bailey, Sue Clarke, Gwena Harman, Darren Greep, Pamela Forbes, Ron Fox and Judith Hart (Town Clerk)

**In attendance:** 1 member of the public

**Press:** No Press in attendance

**19/47. Apologies:** Cllrs Kate Kayley, David Patrick, Huw Cox and Sylvee Phillips

**19/48. Councillors invited to declare any interests:** None

**19/49. Questions and comments from the public:**

Maureen Tuffnell has met with Jennifer Manning of Dartmoor National Park regarding the proposed 'Welcome to Dartmoor' visitors' leaflet for Buckfastleigh which has been amended to a circular walk to include the town centre, Buckfast Abbey and South Devon Railway. It will be available online and will show local facilities such as places to eat. There was also a suggestion to print maps for businesses. Maureen has visited Devon to investigate the possibility of staff leading a guided walk that relates to the town's woollen history to tie in with the Wool Gathering event at the Town Hall in October.

**19/50. Minutes of the Council Matters Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2019 and review actions from this meeting:**

Signed by Cllr Andy Stokes.

**Actions:**

- South Devon Railway visitors sign – a meeting will be held with a representative of SDR to discuss this further.
- Town Hall – Clerk will arrange a meeting to discuss the recruitment of new trustees and a business plan for the charity later in the autumn.

**19/51. Budget Analysis Reports 01.07.19 – 31.07.19 and 01.08.19 – 31.08.19:**

Noted.

**19/52. Bank Payments Reports and Bank Statements 01.07.19 – 31.07.19 and 01.08.19 – 31.08.19:**

Noted

**19/53. Requirement to change the Town Council's online banking provider to facilitate dual authorisation and nomination of four signatories:**

The Town Council's current banking provider will not respond to correspondence or acknowledge the Council's audit and accountability regulations. Members agreed to consider an initial proposal to change banking arrangements to the Unity Trust Bank which already works with town and parish councils, provides online banking, will facilitate dual authorisation and is an ethical bank.

**Decision:** To recommend a resolution to the September Town Council to move all banking to the Unity Trust Bank

Following the May election and the need to change banks four signatories to the bank accounts are required. Cllrs Andy Stokes, Pam Barrett, Sue Clarke and Ron Fox were unanimously proposed.

**Decision:** To be resolved at the September Town Council meeting.

## **19/54. Town Council response to the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service**

### **Consultation:**

A response to the consultation is required by 22 September 2019.

Members agreed that the proposed closure of Ashburton Fire Station, other stations in Devon and the removal of fire engines are government-led cuts which are marketed as restructuring and providing a better service. It is the biggest single cut ever to the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service which is already underspending and has £40 million in reserves. The cuts will involve redundancies, closures and a reduced number of engines. The authority claims that demand has dropped but evidence indicates it is increasing. 2018/19 was the worst year for wildfires and flooding due to the effects of climate change. The figures provided refer mainly to fires and not rescues for e.g. road traffic accidents have significantly increased with more vehicles on the road. The risk of fires is increasing due to the decrease in funding for other organisations e.g. mental health.

The authority claims there is a decrease in the number of incidents that they attend. Devon is a huge geographical area with many rural communities that are hard to reach and require additional engines from other towns. The proposed cuts will affect response times.

Cllr Clarke: The strongest argument is stripping back the resources to rural communities.

Cllr Bailey: The roads are more congested due to more housing. Ashburton station covers more than just Ashburton and Buckfastleigh and all stations are inter-dependent on each other. These proposals are very short-sighted.

Members agreed that improvement to the quality of service is not motivating the change. With an aging population many of whom suffer from poor mobility, isolated farms, river rescues and a high number of historical and listed buildings, fire safety will be compromised.

Cllr Fox: We are not against modernisation, but this consultation is due to funding cuts and it is not acceptable.

Why are there cuts when there are significant reserves and an underspend? Using the slogan "Safer Together" is an insult.

**Action:** Councillors and individuals are encouraged to respond to the consultation. Cllr Stokes to summarise a response on behalf of the Town Council and circulate for comment. Clerk to send to the press, local MP and Minister for Policing and Fire Service (Kit Malthouse).

Member of the public left at 8.10pm and the Chair moved the meeting into a Part II session under Agenda Item No. 9 to discuss a confidential matter

The meeting returned to Part I at 8.30 pm and continued under Agenda Item No. 8.

**19/56. Councillor updates regarding matters relevant to this meeting:**

Cllr Pam Barrett listed the following events which will all take place in the Town Hall:-

- Open Spaces and Life on the Verge meeting – Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September at 6.30pm
- Dartmoor National Park Local Plan Final Draft Consultation – drop-in event Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September from 4.00 to 7.00pm
- Share Shed meeting – Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> September at 7.00pm

The meeting closed at 8.42 pm.