

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held in Room 3 at the Town Hall on Wednesday 22nd January 2020 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors: Andy Stokes, John Bailey, Pamela Forbes, Ron Fox, Darren Greep, David Patrick, Susan Clarke, Kate Kayley, Huw Cox and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

In attendance: 1 member of the public

Press: No Press in attendance

20/110. Apologies: Cllrs Pam Barrett, Sylvee Phillips and Gwena Harman

20/111. Councillors invited to declare any interests:

Cllr Fox declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 5 – to approve the Budget and Precept and abstained from voting as a trustee of Victoria Park.

20/112. To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 27th November 2019 and review of actions from this meeting:

Signed by Cllr Andy Stokes.

Actions from this meeting:

- The Devon County Council contractor working on Fore Street resumed work after the Christmas break.
- The Town Ranger has confirmed that the car which appeared to be abandoned on Church Hill is still taxed and is parked on private land.

20/113. Questions and comments from the public:

A member of the public asked why the work on Fore Street has not been completed by the contractors with only the replacement of the small cobbles?

Action: Clerk to contact Devon County Council (DCC).

20/114. Questions to District and County Councillors: None

20/115. To resolve recommendations from the Council Matters meeting held on 11th November 2019:

19/86. To approve the 2020/21 Budget and Precept.

Recommendations:

- To increase the precept by 1.33% which equates to £2.40 per year for a Band D property or £1.80 per year for a Band B.
- 1.33% will increase the budget from £145,224 to £147,153 for 2020/21.
- To ring-fence £5,000 to create a new Climate and Environmental budget
- To move the surplus to reserves.

Proposed by Cllr Stokes with voting recorded as follows:

7 Members in favour of the above recommendations.

Cllr Ron Fox abstained due to a controlling interest as a trustee of Victoria Park. Cllr Fox did not request a dispensation to vote prior to this meeting.

Cllr Huw Cox abstained as he does not support the perennial grant to Victoria Park.

Decision: Motion carried

19/87. To adopt the revised Financial Regulations.

Decision: All Members in favour.

19/88. To approve the strategy for the use and disposal of the Town Council's Solar Panels.

Decision: All Members in favour.

Members agreed that when the Town Hall and Town Council are separated the ring-fenced funds for the Town Hall will then be awarded as a grant.

20/116. To resolve recommendations from the Buckfastleigh Matters meeting held on 8th January 2020:

20/99. Councillors' updates – management of verges.

Proposal to take over the management of selected sensitive verges around the parish where there are native species. The new ring-fenced Climate and Environmental budget will be used for this.

Decision: It was agreed that the Town Council would take on the management of selected verges with immediate effect so that urgent work can commence and that this will be reviewed in 6 months when further information has been received and a management plan is in place.

20/117. To resolve recommendations from the Council Matters meeting held on 15th January 2020:

20/98. Review of Meeting and Committee structure.

The Town Council inherited a committee structure where only one meeting each month has the decision-making power. It is proposed to have two monthly meetings which will free up the third Wednesday for community events and working parties.

Decision: All in favour. The new structure will take effect from the first Wednesday in March 2020.

20/118. Planning applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:

None

20/119. Ongoing problem of blocked drains and gullies around the parish:

Drains and gullies are blocked by debris from fields, mud, grit, leaves etc. Regular clearance and jetting by DCC no longer occurs. Town and Parish Councils are encouraged to recruit their own Road Wardens and undertake the training provided by DCC, but this can only be for volunteers and not Council employed staff who would not be covered under DCC insurance. The Clerk also expressed concern regarding the risk assessment and inspection of each job. It is understood that Totnes Town Council may have employed their own Road Warden.

Action: Clerk to contact Totnes Town Clerk and ask whether they have employed a Road Warden, whether s/he is a member of staff, a contractor or a volunteer, and whether this could be a full-time job that could be shared around parishes.

Cllr Cox volunteered on an interim basis to be the Road Warden for Buckfastleigh as he has Chapter 8 training and equipment.

Action: Clerk to nominate Cllr Cox to Devon County Council.

It was suggested that residents lobby MPs to highlight the effects caused by lack of funding and bring this to the attention of the press. The community should also be encouraged to write letters of complaint. Members agreed that a notice should be placed in the news sheet to this effect and that letters can be sent to the Town Council with details of potholes which can then be forwarded to DCC.

Action: Cllr Stokes to draft a press release.

20/120. Chair's Announcements:

The Heart of Buckfastleigh Awards and SOUP event will take place on Friday 24th January at 6.00pm in the Town Hall.

The Christmas Fair Committee had provided an end of grant report to the Council which was read out by the Chair to the meeting. It was agreed that this was the most successful Christmas Fair to date.

20/121. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Patrick confirmed that the site visit regarding the repair of the river monitoring gauge (FROG) had been arranged for earlier that day.

20/122. Items requiring Urgent Attention:

Cllr Patrick asked about the planning application for 450 houses at Newton Abbot where the vote by Teignbridge District Council (TDC) members was held in private due to controversy at the meeting. Five requests for a recorded vote are required but only four requests were received so there is no public record of how the TDC Councillors voted. Cllr Cox agreed to provide an update of proceedings.

Summary of Key Messages:

- Precept and Budget - ratified
- Management of selected sensitive verges - ratified
- Review of meeting structure – two Town Council meetings to be held each month with effect from March 2020.
- Road Warden and campaign for better provision

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm.