

# BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held in Room 3 at the Town Hall on Wednesday 26th February 2020 at 7.30 pm.**

**Present:** Councillors: Andy Stokes, John Bailey, Pam Barrett, Ron Fox, Darren Greep, Gwena Harman, Kate Kayley, Huw Cox and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

**In attendance:** Ella Briens, Dartmoor National Park (DNPA) Ranger

**Press:** No Press in attendance

**20/123. Apologies:** Cllrs Sylvee Phillips, David Patrick, Pamela Forbes and Susan Clarke

**20/124. Councillors invited to declare any interests:** None

**20/125. To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020 and review of actions from this meeting:**

Noted with one amendment.

Cllr Barrett gave an update regarding the verge management plan which is being worked up to identify the priority sites around the parish. The Be Wild group is working with various agencies to do this within the next few weeks. It has been agreed that the Town Council adopts the management of all verges except visibility splays. Some verges however will have no plans as is currently the case with Devon County Council (DCC).

Minutes signed by Cllr Andy Stokes.

## **Actions from this meeting:**

- The Town Ranger is monitoring repair works to Fore Street.
- Signing up to the DCC Road Warden process is slow. The Clerk reported that Totnes Town Council is facing the same problems as Buckfastleigh. They are employing their own member of staff in a similar capacity to our Town Ranger. Cllr Cox to draft a response to DCC regarding the lack of funding and under-resourcing for road maintenance. To be circulated to all Members for comment.

Cllr Stokes has not drafted a press release as yet, but residents are encouraged to lobby MPs and highlight flooding and drainage problems. Leaves are one of the contributory factors to blocked drains and clearing leaves is the responsibility of Teignbridge District Council (TDC).

## **20/126. Questions and comments from the public:**

Ella Briens, DNPA Ranger, reported that footpath improvements around the parish were successful and they are bidding for more funding. Jen Manning, DNPA'S Recreation Strategy Officer has created a Buckfastleigh walk to encourage more visitors. Ella is supporting the Holy Trinity wildflowers initiative but would like to hear of any other projects which she may be able to help with.

Ella attended the recent wildlife meeting organised by Be Wild in the Town Hall and is involved with the natural flood management plan up on the moor which includes peatland restoration and building natural oak dams and stone dams. She is concerned that there is such an issue with blocked drains in the town when there is such an effort to alleviate flooding upstream by managing the moor.

Ella reported that she is a member of the Climate Emergency Green Team for DNPA who aim to be carbon neutral by 2025, which means reducing their carbon footprint by 60%. They are keen to share ideas.

A new DNPA management plan has been approved by members and is now open for consultation until 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

DNPA are leading a campaign to encourage dog owners to put their dogs on leads on the moor.

Cllr Barrett: There is no process for involving DNPA Members in the parish who do not attend Town Council meetings.

**20/127. Questions to District and County Councillors:**

Cllr Cox was asked about the new TDC budget which was approved on 24<sup>th</sup> February. He confirmed that there will be a £5.00 increase for Band D properties and a 2.94% increase to the budget. A £1.00 fee will be introduced for Sunday parking. New planning enforcement officers will be recruited, and a new climate change officer appointed.

Cllr Barrett: In Buckfastleigh the Sunday parking charge for car parks is currently 50p so increasing it to £1.00 is doubling the charge.

There will also be a charge for emptying bins on non-TDC owned land.

TDC have raised the precept to meet the government deficit, support current services and provide some new services e.g. new social housing. The new parking charge was however very controversial and the vote for the budget was by 26:17. Cllr Cox confirmed that he voted in favour of the increase.

Cllr Barrett highlighted council tax money going into the central pot which is mostly focused on Newton Abbot and Dawlish with no benefit to the residents of Buckfastleigh.

**20/128. Planning applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:**

No current applications.

**20/129. Ongoing problem of blocked drains and gullies around the parish:**

Item already discussed earlier in the meeting. Further discussion deferred to the next meeting

**20/130. Format for the Annual Town Meeting scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020:**

The Clerk explained that the Annual Town Meeting must be held anytime between the 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> June and is an opportunity for residents and organisations to report on activities. The meeting is facilitated by the Town Council and chaired by the Council Chair.

It was suggested to invite the Scouts to the Annual Town Meeting to give an update of their activities and encourage them to have the opportunity to say what they like about the town and what they would like to see.

**Action:**

Cllr Barrett to contact the Scouts to this effect. Meeting to be moved to an earlier time of 6.30pm.

**20/131. Chair's Announcements:** None

**20/132. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:**

Cllr Cox attended a tree conference with tree officers, the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and other organisations to discuss how they are working together and get an overview of tree planting initiatives. Grants are available from the Woodland Trust and they are looking at funding edible trees which grow fruit and nuts.

Cllr Stokes attended an Action on Climate Change Teignbridge (ACT) meeting. Their website includes the carbon footprint for each parish. He suggested that the Town Council joins Teign Energy Communities which is an organisation within Teignbridge that helps to deliver local renewable energy and energy saving projects. This will be raised as an agenda item at the next meeting.

Cllr Bailey and the Clerk are waiting for a response from TDC following a request for further information for the proposed asset transfer of green space within the parish. Cllr Cox and the TDC portfolio holder to carry a site visit to discuss further.

Cllrs Barrett and Stokes and the Clerk met with Young Devon. They have produced a youth strategy and charter which will come to the Council once amended.

Cllrs Barrett and Stokes and the Clerk met with representatives of St Luke's Church to discuss a draft joint communication to the community to look at future options for community space and a jointly funded review.

Concerns have been raised by some residents and trustees about the public allowing their dogs to foul in Victoria Park. The TDC Dog Protection Order covers all green spaces. The trustees have therefore agreed to exclude all dogs from the park with effect from the spring. Signs to this effect will be erected in due course.

Be Buckfastleigh is developing a Be Wild programme which includes the following events and activities:

8<sup>th</sup> March - bird box building event.

25<sup>th</sup> April – dawn chorus and bluebells walk

3<sup>rd</sup> May – dawn chorus and bluebells walk

9<sup>th</sup> May - Swift Festival

24<sup>th</sup> July (evening) -25<sup>th</sup> July (all day) – Be Wild Weekend

Walking for Softies on Mondays at 12.30 pm and walk and play for children followed by play and refreshment sessions at the Living Room on Fridays at 2.00 pm.

A free energy-saving event took place in the Living Room on 19<sup>th</sup> February which is part of the Big Energy Saving Network campaign.

Cllr Barrett had attended an event in London where a presentation by Professor Michael Marmot, Director of the University College London Institute of Health Equity reported on the health inequalities survey first published in 2010. The results of the survey demonstrate that life expectancy has started to drop. Absolute poverty has increased for first time since Napoleonic War. Steps taken at higher level City Councils to address some of the issues are comparable to what Buckfastleigh has achieved for e.g. free children's activities, more access

to green spaces. A network of local authorities have become 'Marmot Cities' where the Marmot principles to reduce inequality and improve health outcomes are used to formulate policies and work with other organisations. This could possibly be followed by towns and villages and the efforts of Buckfastleigh were recognised.

**20/133. Items requiring Urgent Attention:** None

**20/134. Summary of Key Messages:**

- DNPA footpath maintenance
- Blocked gullies and drains
- Tree conference
- Dogs in Victoria Park
- Be Wild programme of events and activities

The meeting closed at 8.58 pm.