

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting using the remote meeting service Zoom held on Wednesday 15th July 2020 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillors: Andy Stokes (Chair), Pam Barrett, John Bailey, Sue Clarke, Huw Cox (arrived at 7.36pm), David Patrick, Sylvee Phillips and Judith Hart (Town Clerk)

In attendance: Cllr John Nutley (Teignbridge District Council), Kathy Taylor (Sustrans) and Mark Jeffries (Share Shed)

Press: None

20/52. Apologies: Cllr Ron Fox

Cllrs Pamela Forbes, Darren Greep, Gwena Harman and Kate Kayley did not give apologies prior to the meeting

20/53. Councillors invited to declare any interests: Cllr Sylvee Phillips was granted a dispensation to vote and comment as a Member with a controlling interest with reference to the Bungalow Youth Project and Valiant Soldier grant applications under Agenda Item No. 10.

Cllrs Pam Barrett and Huw Cox declared a controlling interest in the Bungalow Youth Project and abstained from voting.

20/54. To approve and sign the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 17th June 2020 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes signed by Cllr Andy Stokes.

Actions from this meeting:

- 20/37 – the Clerk has identified that the footpath behind Tweenaways is the responsibility of Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) and that the Parish Sweeper does not generally remove clippings left by the public but agreed to do so on this occasion.
- 20/37 – the locations and opening times of the Share Shed, a mobile library of things is being advertised on social media by the Town Council.
- 20/44 – unfortunately due to other commitments the Town Council was unable to respond to the Teignbridge Local Plan consultation.
- 20/46 – the Clerk had drafted a questionnaire initially for the check-in and chat volunteers to use. The Chair is now looking to adapt this to a more targeted questionnaire which can be used for broader circulation as part of a community consultation exercise.

20/55. Questions and comments from the public:

Mark Jeffries of the Share Shed advised the meeting that they have now visited Buckfastleigh, South Brent, Ashburton and Totnes on two occasions. Visits to both the Football Club and Victoria Park were busy and thanks was conveyed to the Town Council for their support.

Share Shed have now submitted a funding application to the Coop to assist communities to set up their own Share Shed initiative so that they can move on to other towns.

It was agreed that Buckfastleigh would be interested in this in the future and Cllr Barrett congratulated Mark and his colleagues for the success of this project.

The Chair brought forward Agenda Item No. 12 and introduced Kathy Taylor of Sustrans to the meeting.

20/56. Cycle South Dartmoor:

Cycle South Dartmoor is a group that consists of members of Sustrans, the public and councillors. Sustrans have already carried out a feasibility study for the creation of a cycle path from South Brent to Buckfastleigh and Ashburton to connect to other towns along the A38 corridor.

The group have been meeting since 2015 and during this time Buckfastleigh Town Council have been very helpful and provided financial support towards the study. They are currently looking at how the proposed route can be improved and will be seeking public opinion to comment on a new street design strategy which has already been adopted by Ivybridge.

More people are now walking and cycling so this is a good opportunity to progress to the next step. The group are therefore asking for the support of the Town Council to create a street design for the South Brent to Ashburton phase and will be applying for funding from several sponsors.

It was noted that the proposal to create a cycle path along the railway and river from Buckfastleigh to Totnes has not been forthcoming due to the challenging landscape and landowner issues which have not been resolved.

There is a statutory requirement to provide alternative transport links such as cycle routes to roads.

Cllr Bailey commented on the cost of the Ivybridge street design report and that the Town Council could not be expected to pay a similar contribution, but this is a good idea if the funding is available.

Kathy confirmed that Ivybridge had already secured the support of Highways England, Plymouth City Council and other larger authorities so they are committed to the project.

The South Brent to Ashburton phase is already supported by DNPA and South Hams District Council. The £937 annual cost of bus travel for over 16s to travel to South Dartmoor school highlights the need for this initiative.

Action: The Chair proposed that the Town Council supports Cycle South Dartmoor to progress this project for the benefit of Buckfastleigh. All Members in agreement.

20/57. Questions to District and County Councillors:

Cllr Patrick asked Cllrs Nutley and Cox why large swathes of the Devon landscape is losing its green space to housing when there are currently 1,500 vacant properties in the Teignbridge area alone (source: National Government statistics). Will these empty properties be brought back into use and can the Town Council seek assurances from the District Council that this will happen?

Cllr Cox disputed the figure quoted citing 300 vacant properties and that there is a scheme to bring these back into occupation.

Cllr Patrick requested clarification as to why the government statistics are so distinctly different to those provided by Teignbridge District Council (TDC)?

Cllr Nutley advised that it has been acknowledged that new houses are not generally occupied by local people and that a letter has been sent by the Leader of the Council to the Minister of Housing but no response to date has been received.

Cllr Nutley reported that TDC has held numerous virtual meetings and that the Greater Exeter Strategy will be coming up for consultation in September although this will only affect the part of Buckfastleigh that lies within Teignbridge.

TDC will be reviewing their response to the Covid-19 crisis later in the year by dividing communities into 3 categories: urban, rural and coastal and each group will consist of 6 councillors.

DNPA meetings are also ongoing with the primary focus on illegal gatherings on the moor which is causing difficulties for the Park Rangers and police with, in some cases roadblocks deployed to prevent access.

Cllr Stokes confirmed that the Clerk is now receiving TDC updates, but he has still not received a response to the letter he sent to Cllr Hook regarding his original questions about the distribution and number of food parcels to vulnerable groups. The Buckfastleigh response could there not gauge the level of need required.

20/58. Budget Analysis Report 01.06.20 – 30.06.20: Noted

20/59. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.06.20 – 30.06.20: Noted

20/60. Quarterly Bank Reconciliation: Noted

20/61. Annual Review of Standing Orders:

The Clerk highlighted two amendments to the Standing Orders. The legislation that facilitated the use of virtual meetings has not been repealed so this section of the Standing Orders will remain in place until notification is received to remove.

Decision: Amendments resolved unanimously.

20/62. Buckfastleigh Covid-19 Community Emergency Response Update:

Government support for the vulnerable will cease at the end of July. The Buckfastleigh Response however, will continue as it may still be needed for a second wave of the infection. Currently there is an average of 5 calls a day so the service has been reduced to mornings only.

The new communications software has been up and running since 13th July.

As people return to work there has been a decrease in volunteer capacity. There will be a need to examine the impact of the pandemic on the community both economically and the increased demand for the Food Bank which is likely to continue for some time.

It was agreed that the ring-fenced Covid-19 fund should be retained to help fund possible initiatives that may be needed as an outcome of the crisis. It was suggested that the Share Shed model is one example that could be adopted.

20/63. Smaller and Larger Grant Applications:

The following organisations were awarded grants:

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| i) | The Bungalow Youth Project | £500 refurbishment |
| ii) | Sharing Buckfastleigh | £250 luncheon club |
| iii) | The Valiant Soldier & Heritage Centre | £420 new tables and chairs |
| iv) | Smooth Space | £450 Buckfastleigh Swift Project |

Cllrs Barrett and Cox abstained from voting for item i)

Cllr Bailey voted against item iii)

Cllr Phillips advised that The Valiant Soldier will be looking at free entry for local residents and will be applying to DNPA for funding to create a dedicated archive room. The grant application to the Town Council for new folding chairs and tables is needed for group activities and meetings such as the Memory Café and Royal British Legion.

A larger grant application had also been received from the Buckfastleigh Bowling Club to assist with funding a programme of refurbishment which had been circulated to Members prior to this meeting.

Decision: Application deferred pending further information about the cost of the project and evidence of community engagement. Clerk to arrange a meeting between representative(s) of the club with Cllrs Bailey and Cox to discuss further and/or attend via Zoom the next Town Council meeting.

20/64. Buckfastleigh response to the Teignbridge Local Plan Consultation:

Cllr Cox confirmed that he had submitted his own response to the consultation but not on behalf of the Town Council. Due to other commitments and time constraints the Council was unable to comment prior to the deadline.

20/65. Forward planning to 2021 – to discuss new and existing projects:

The Town Council holds a community consultation workshop at this time of the year to examine 'Where Next for Buckfastleigh' and discuss which projects are taken forward and what new projects could be considered and how these could be resourced for eg. money advice, support for families and other implications resulting from the Covid-19 crisis. Which projects will be identified for the 2021/22 Budget and will these be beyond our usual remit?

It was agreed that initially the Buckfastleigh Response volunteers could consult with the residents with whom they have had contact, but other methods of community consultation are needed for eg. outdoor councillor surgeries, an online and paper survey and a discussion on the Be Buckfastleigh channel.

Suggestions included a community celebration such as a music festival, sports tournament or street party when lockdown ends but it was agreed that it is difficult to make any plans at the current time. There are some projects that could be agreed in the short term such as an illumination display for Christmas however, the Council does not have the staff or resources to implement every project.

20/66. To discuss Buckfastleigh Neighbourhood Plan:

Cllr Cox asked the meeting if there is an appetite to re-visit the Neighbourhood Plan?

Cllr Stokes explained that the draft Neighbourhood Plan involved a huge amount of work by many people and it was agreed that the draft document was too large and needed to be streamlined with the goals identified within the plan becoming part of a Parish Plan. A new consultation would be required to confirm that the original aspirations of the community still apply. The document is nevertheless a useful body of evidence but due to the lapse of time fresh input is needed.

It was highlighted that although neighbourhood plans are supposed to influence local planning there is no evidence from other communities that this is the case and that neighbourhood plans are effective. Do planning authorities take notice of parish council plans when determining planning applications?

Action: Cllrs Stokes and Cox to discuss further with a view to Cllr Cox taking over this task.

20/67. Youth Provision Working Group:

Cllr Cox referred to the new Youth Charter adopted at the June meeting and agreed that it would be good if representatives from every youth organisation in the town subscribes to this and that a working group is set up to this effect.

It was agreed that this would be the next step of the strategy. Cllr Clarke offered to lead this project due to her experience and independence from the local youth groups with her first task to draft a terms of reference for a new working party which would report back to the Town Council.

Decision: Cllr Sue Clarke was nominated to lead the implementation of the objectives of the Youth Strategy via a working party. Resolved unanimously

20/68. Chairs announcements: None

20/69. Councillor updates regarding matters relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Barrett: Victoria Park trustees have met, and the reopening of the swimming pool is under review due to the restricted number of people that can safely use the pool and only in lanes. Nationally most pools are not opening as it would not be cost effective.

Cllr Cox: There are no planned events for the Orchard Millennium Green in the foreseeable future and the tea hut will remain close to protect the volunteers.

20/70. Items requiring Urgent Attention: None

20/71. Summary of Key Messages:

- Share Shed update
- Town Council to support the Cycle South Dartmoor plan
- 4 Smaller grants awarded to local groups
- Looking at new ways of consulting with the community to plan for 2021/22
- A new youth working party will be led by Cllr Sue Clarke

Cllr Bailey enquired about progress with the possible transfer of Teignbridge owned green spaces. Cllr Cox confirmed that he is still pursuing this.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.