

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting using the remote meeting service Zoom held on Wednesday 6th January 2021 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: Sue Clarke (Chair), John Bailey, Huw Cox, Kate Kayley, Erin Kohler-Ockmore, Sylvee Phillips, Andy Stokes and Judith Hart (Town Clerk)

In attendance: 1 member of the public

Press: None

21/188. Apologies: Cllrs Sarah Parker Khan and John Nutley (Teignbridge District Council) and Cllr David Patrick

No apologies received from Cllrs Ron Fox, Darren Greep and Gwena Harman

21/189. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

21/190. Notice of a Casual Vacancy and the interim appointment of a Deputy Chair and Mayor:

Members agreed to defer this item to the next meeting as not all Members present to discuss.

21/191. To approve and sign the minutes from the Town Council meeting held on 16th December 2020 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes signed by Cllr Clarke

Actions from this meeting:

- 20/179. To discuss the draft Budget and Precept 2021/22 – revised budget to be resolved at the meeting scheduled for 20 January 2021.
- 20/173. Supporting Housing Delivery and Public Service Infrastructure consultation, 20/183. Salmon Leap Weir update and 20/185 Councillor updates – Traffic Regulations Amendment to be discussed later on this agenda.
- 20/188. Part II – pending further enquiries.

21/192. Questions and comments from the public: None

21/193. Questions to District and County Councillors:

Cllr Cox advised that the Teignbridge District Council (TDC) budget has been significantly affected by the periods of lockdown with reduced income from revenue sources. It is likely, pending agreement, that the precept will be increased by 2%. Further Covid-19 grant funding opportunities for communities will be looked at and support for shielding will be made available again.

21/194. Response to the Government Supporting Housing Delivery and Public Service Infrastructure Consultation:

There are three key parts to this consultation:

1. A proposal to introduce a new category of planning permission is for commercial, business and service users making it easier to change to residential use.
2. No planning permission will be required for the expansion and adaptation of schools, colleges, prisons and hospitals.
3. New categories of commercial properties are also proposed.

The consultation does not apply to areas that lie within the National parks, but further clarification is needed regarding the impact on conservation areas such as the town centre of Buckfastleigh.

Members expressed concern regarding the use of No. 1 as the High Street has already lost many retail businesses and this may speed up the process of decline with empty units becoming solely residential. The impact of the coronavirus has accelerated this due to an increase in online shopping however, the importance and convenience of local shops during times of crisis has also been highlighted. It is not clear why the current planning system needs to be changed.

Concerns were noted but leaving empty shops and units to decay should not be the alternative and there is some merit in easing the restrictions as current planning permission can be restrictive for town centres.

It was agreed that low-cost housing is needed, but new legislation will encourage more expensive and exclusive developments.

It was noted that currently there is only one empty unit in the centre of Buckfastleigh and that during the pandemic many local shops are thriving, but people may want to return to the traditional shopping experience in town centres in the future. The value of local shops has been demonstrated during the coronavirus.

Members agreed that there should be some element of affordability and that the new proposals erode the local democracy decision making process.

Decision: Cllr Stokes to circulate a draft response to the consultation on behalf of the Town Council for comment. To include the following:

1. Highlight the impact of the loss of retail and commercial businesses.
2. That more government support is needed for the retail sector.
3. To challenge the erosion of local democracy.

Proposed by Cllr Stokes, seconded by Cllr Cox with all Members in favour. Clerk to submit agreed response by 28th January 2021.

21/195. To discuss a Devon County Council (Traffic Regulation) Amendment Order:

Cllr Clarke highlighted residents' concerns regarding the proposed amendments which include a further reduction in the availability of on-street parking spaces.

Proposed restrictions for Jordan Street are as a likely result of lorries which are too wide using this road for access and it has been suggested by one resident that Jordan Street residents have resident parking permits and use a privately owned redundant piece of land for parking. Cllr Cox agreed to approach the landowner to suggest this as a way of alleviating parking problems in this area of the town.

It was agreed that restricting parking is in some areas necessary due to the impact of indiscriminate parking compromising access for emergency vehicles and refuse collection lorries, but it does not resolve the problem. Better public transport links and frequency may also reduce dependency on cars, but cuts to the bus service continue.

Action: Cllr Clarke to draft a response to the proposed amendments to include that the Town Council supports the proposals for Silver Street and Station Road and to highlight that careless parking has reduced the width of Station Road.

Member of the public: *The priority of Devon County Council Highways is to make roads safe but they tend to concentrate on the larger towns such as Newton Abbot and Teignmouth. Emergency vehicles are often delayed by thoughtless parking in Buckfastleigh.*

21/196. Salmon Leap/Kilbury Weir update:

Following further investigation, it has been established that the land is currently leased from the Duchy of Somerset to a company called China Blue, but there is still no progress in establishing who is liable, if any, to carrying out the repairs to make the weir safe.

It was agreed that there needs to be a discussion with canoeists who use this stretch of water due to the hidden dangers in the water from fallen structures and if the more dangerous parts can be removed as currently demolition does not seem to be an option.

Action: To continue to pursue enquiries.

21/197. Chair's Announcements:

Cllr Clarke announced that Ray Staines, the Town Ranger is resigning from his post and conveyed her thanks for his work, skill and knowledge.

The delivery of 55 Christmas meals, treat bags and children's gifts went smoothly and feedback has been very positive.

Cllr Stokes thanked Sue, the volunteers and Town Council staff who made this possible

Cllr Phillips congratulated The Media Workshop and Town Council for the excellent Christmas light show and it was noted that over 400 people attended the display over three evenings.

21/198. Councillor updates regarding matters relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Phillips provided a list of suggestions that she has received from local residents which included more car parking, improvement of the entrance to Old Totnes Road, a Zebra crossing across Strode Road to the Millennium Green and a public toilet on the green, repair of the launder and replacement or removal of the town clock.

Action: Cllr Clarke to ask Inga to carry out a consultation using the news sheet to seek suggestions and comments about the future of the town clock.

21/199. Items requiring Urgent Attention: None

21/200. Summary of Key Messages:

Clerk to liaise with the Chair.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.