

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting using the remote meeting service Zoom held on Wednesday 17th March 2021 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: Sue Clarke (Chair), John Bailey, Huw Cox, Darren Greep, Erin Kohler-Ockmore, David Patrick, Sylvee Phillips, Andy Stokes, Bryony Tilsley and Judith Hart (Town Clerk)

In attendance: Cllrs John Nutley and Sarah Parker Khan (Teignbridge District Council), Tracey Hamston (Buckfastleigh Verge Management Project) and 3 members of the public

Press: None

21/259. Apologies: None

No apologies received from Cllrs Gwena Harman, Kate Kayley and Ron Fox

21/260. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

21/261. New co-opted Town Councillor Declaration of Acceptance of Office and welcome:

Cllr Bryony Tilsley was welcomed by the Chair as a new Town Councillor.

The Chair moved the agenda to item 4.

21/262. Questions and comments from the public:

A member of the public raised a number of questions relating to the running of Buckfastleigh Town Hall including a review of the management committee and current health and safety policies. It was agreed that this was not the appropriate forum for this conversation, that the member of public cannot set agenda items or call a meeting and day to day management is not the responsibility of the trustees.

The Chair agreed however, that a meeting of the trustees was a good idea after Cllr Stokes felt it would be useful to have an update of councillor roles and responsibilities regarding the Town Hall.

The Chair moved the agenda to item 3.

21/263. To approve and sign the minutes from the Town Council meeting held on 3rd March 2021 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes signed by Cllr Clarke.

Actions from this meeting:

- 21/222. Carried over from the meeting held on 3rd February 2021 - Buckfastleigh Swift Project – Cllr Cox advised that there had been a delay due to access to the Town Hall. A proposal will be brought to this meeting in due course.
- 21/223. Carried over from the meeting held on 3rd February 2021 - Rural skip/bulky waste collection service – meeting scheduled for 24th March 2021.

- 21/251. Questions to District and County Councillors – Cllr to research ownership of the old disused toilet block on Chapel Street - pending

7.23pm - 2 further members of the public joined the meeting.

21/264. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Parker Khan gave an update regarding Teignbridge District Council (TDC) activities:

- A Covid recovery workshop has been held to help shape future plans.
- Additional funding for wired technology and connection to properties in more rural areas has been secured through the Connecting Devon and Somerset roll out of superfast Broadband.
- Additional funding has been allocated for domestic violence initiatives which include working with perpetrators and their families to break the cycle of abuse through the Splitz Support Service.
- The election for Devon County Council will be going ahead in May.

Cllr Cox gave an update concerning the Stover Park steering committee which includes funding from the Lottery for the first phase of development to carry out environmental impact assessments. This will be a major project that will involve all landowners contributing to a master plan to protect the future of the park and extend it to connect to other areas to ease the impact of high visitor numbers by allowing visitors to walk further afield.

It was noted that TDC have published proposals to increase car parking charges. Cllr Phillips asked if the times for The Globe car park could be increased for the convenience of shoppers? Cllr Nutley as Chair of the TDC Car Parking Review Group said that he would welcome any proposals and that they are looking at the installation of parking machines for those areas which still benefit from free parking. Cllr Parker Khan asked for a response from the Town Council. It was noted that the charge for parking permits will also be increased.

Action: Members to review the proposals at the next meeting.

A member of the public raise concerns about the poor condition of Strode Road and Dart Bridge Road which will be exacerbated by traffic using this as a diversion when works commence on the A38.

Action: Chair to draft a letter to Devon Highways.

2 members of the public left the meeting at 7.35pm

21/265. Budget Analysis Report 01.02.21 – 28.02.21: Noted

21/266. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.02.21 – 28.02.21: Noted

Cllr Stokes proposed to accept the above 3 reports which was seconded by Cllr Cox with all Members in agreement.

21/267. Review and adopt by resolution the Risk Assessment Management 2021:

21/268. Review and adopt by resolution the Statement of Internal Control 2021:

Members confirmed that they had reviewed the Risk Assessment and Statement of Internal Control. Cllr Clarke proposed to adopt the above 2 reports which was seconded by Cllr Stokes with all Members in agreement.

21/269. Changes to Annual Governance and Accountability Return – 2020-21 Period for Exercise of Public Rights (2019-20 Annual Return) – to approve, sign and minute letter to the Internal Auditor:

Members confirmed that they had reviewed and approved the dates of the Notice for the Period of Exercise of Public Rights.

21/270. Response to the Teignbridge Housing Strategy Consultation deferred from the meeting held on 3 March 2021:

It was felt that this is a forward thinking and visionary document, but it is a list of good intentions which may not be met due to the constraints imposed by government. There are no details as to how what is effectively a wish list, will be put into practice, but it does provide a framework and generally there was no objection to the contents.

The document notes that there has been an increase in the over 65s population, a duty to provide traveller sites and the impact of people relocating to the south west now that it is easier to work from home.

TDC are working with landlords to return empty properties into the rental market and have met 92% of government targets for new build.

A member of the public asked how much new build will be affordable to meet local need and although the Town Council has continued to lobby for the provision of fair and affordable housing, in real terms this has not been achieved. Affordable housing was set at 60% of the market value of a property but the Government increased this to 80% which is beyond the reach of many local people. Developers often wriggle out of their target commitments due to viability issues and house prices both for sale and rental continue to increase.

Cllr Parker Khan confirmed that there are currently 1,000 people on the TDC housing waiting list who must have a local connection to qualify for housing. “Affordable” properties are 11 times the average local wage. TDC is however committed to the provision of social housing and has built 100 units. Dartmoor National Park Authority have met 30% of their 50% target.

TDC acknowledges that younger people are moving away due to lack of employment opportunities and the cost of housing.

Action: Cllrs Clarke and Stokes to draft a response.

21/271. To consider and agree the proposed options in the amended draft Buckfastleigh Verge Management Action Plan:

The draft plan had been circulated for comment pending a few minor amendments. Devon Highways support the plan, and the Neighbourhood Highways Officer has addressed specific

questions which have arisen.

Currently 4 volunteers have signed up to the e-learning course and 3 sites have been identified and approved for management.

Devon County Council (DCC) covers third party liability, but only volunteers that have completed the Highways Safety Awareness course can be covered by the Town Council's insurers.

Cllr Cox will undertake the grass cutting adjacent to the highway as the Road Warden and he is permitted to supervise up to 2 volunteers under this agreement.

Tracey explained that this project will not be part of the Be Wild initiative although many of the volunteers are also members of Be Wild and a new group called the Buckfastleigh Action for Nature Group is being set up. The whole project is under the Devon Verge Management Scheme.

Decision: Cllr Stokes proposed to accept the draft policy which was seconded by Cllr Clarke with all Members in favour.

21/272. To discuss the planting of a replacement native tree at the Church Hill turning circle:

Cllr Cox advised that following the removal of the sycamore at the turning circle which died some years ago, DCC have agreed to the planting of a small leaf lime subject to the Town Council taking responsibility for the inspection and maintenance of the tree. The young tree has been donated by a local beneficiary and will need to be protected with some fencing for the early period of its life.

Decision: Proposed by Cllr Stokes, seconded by Cllr Clarke with all Members in agreement. Cllr Cox to arrange.

21/273. To consider a quote for the replacement of the Town Clock:

Cllr Bailey confirmed that the existing clock is in a very poor state of repair and both the case and working mechanism are covered in rust. Two quotations have been received for the replacement of the Town Clock as follows:

Quote A. £3,234 (no VAT) to supply and install which includes new brackets

Quote B. £1,980 + VAT to supply only

Cllr Bailey advised Members that his own company could assist with the installation of the brackets at no additional cost.

Cllr Stokes asked for more consultation with the community for a balanced response as he would not support this amount of public funds being spent on a clock.

Members agreed however, that a new clock would provide some identity and a focal point for

the high street if alternative funding could be sort although a small contribution from the Town Council would be reasonable.

A member of the public agreed that the clock would be of historical importance for the town centre but understood the financial concerns.

Cllr Tilsley offered to look at crowd funding and other funding opportunities and a naming competition was suggested. Cllr Nutley also offered the availability of funds from the TDC Councillors Community Fund.

Decision: Cllr Stokes proposed to select Quote B if alternative funding can be sought and for the Town Council to continue with ownership which was seconded by Cllr Clarke with all Members in agreement.

21/274. To discuss a post lockdown plan for Buckfastleigh:

Cllr Patrick asked Members to consider the Governments four step plan to end lockdown and a plan for recovery within the town for eg. will the Woolfest and Christmas Fair take place this year? Pennywell Farm can reopen on 12th April and South Devon Railway will be running again from 17th May.

Cllr Greep confirmed that the Rugby Club will reopen and that they are planning a free music event for one day in the summer.

Cllr Phillips asked that as the Town Council provides funding towards the vintage bus can the route be varied occasionally?

How can the Town Council help to support local organisations host local events again?

21/275. Chair's Announcements: No matters to report.

21/276. Councillor updates regarding matters relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Patrick was pleased to report that the flood gauge camera will be repaired on 31st March 2021.

Cllr Kohler-Ockmore confirmed that the road at Buckfast which had previously been highlighted by the Town Council as area of significantly large potholes has now been resurfaced.

Cllr Clarke has tasked Inga with generating more publicity for the town and would welcome ideas from the Cllrs.

Councillors gave a vote of thanks which will be recorded in the Key Messages to the medical staff and volunteers working as part of the Covid-19 vaccine roll-out programme who had recently reached a total 20,000 vaccinations at St. Boniface House.

The Clerk confirmed that there is no further progress regarding the decommissioning of the CCTV without keys to access the wiring in the lamp posts which support the cameras.

21/277. Items requiring Urgent Attention: None

21/278. Summary of Key Messages:

Clerk to liaise with the Chair.

The meeting closed at 9.04pm.