

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting using the remote meeting service Zoom held on Wednesday 5th May 2021 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: Sue Clarke (Chair), Erin Kohler-Ockmore, Huw Cox, Kate Kayley, David Patrick, Sylvee Phillips, Andy Stokes, and Judith Hart (Town Clerk). Cllr John Bailey arrived at 7.45 pm.

In attendance: Cllrs Sarah Parker Khan and John Nutley (Teignbridge District Council). Cllr Yuli Somme (Chagford Parish Council)

Press: None

21/34. Apologies: Cllr Bryony Tilsley

No apologies received from Cllrs Darren Greep and Ron Fox

21/35. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

21/36. To approve and sign the minutes from the Town Council meeting held on 21st April 2021 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes signed by Cllr Clarke

Actions from this meeting:

- 21/32 Urgent items - Return to face to face meetings – to be discussed as an agenda item later in this meeting.
- 21/32 Urgent items – Police update following the theft of several catalytic converters in the town. The police suspect it is a gang who is moving from town to town.

21/37. Questions and comments from the public: None

21/38. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Nutley reported on 2 meetings. Firstly, the Local Government Association which has developed a model Councillors' Code of Conduct and secondly Teignbridge District Council (TDC) has created a new procedures committee to review the constitution, operations and working practices, development and training, and make recommendations to the full Council.

Cllr Cox: The ground floor of TDC Head Office, Forde House is to be available for rent to local businesses to generate more income. New carbon reduction measures are being introduced for e.g. the installation of an air source heat pump. A government grant and a loan have been approved but this will only be a 1% increase to the taxpayers.

Cllr Patrick asked if community groups would be able to hire the new space in Forde House too and if not is this an option that has been considered?

Cllr Cox: TDC are open to all ideas.

Cllr Nutley to send relevant information to the Clerk.

Cllr Parker Khan: A new debt respite scheme has been launched which will provide advice

and support and a moratorium on those who are being pursued for debt e.g. council tax. Individuals will have access to a debt advisor to help mediate. Cllr Parker Khan to send information to the Clerk.

21/39. Notification of Town Councillor casual vacancy:

The Clerk confirmed that Cllr Gwena Harman has resigned. The Council wishes her well with her future endeavours.

21/40. To review the requirement to return to face to face Town Council meetings after 7th May 2021:

The coronavirus legislation which permitted local councils to meet virtually expires on 7th May. A subsequent court ruling confirmed that local councils must return to face to face meetings despite the difficulties and moral dilemma this presents to each authority. The Chair outlined four options:

1. The Town Council returns to face to face meetings in the Town Hall
2. All meetings are suspended until Members feel that it is safe to meet indoors
3. Those who are happy to meet in person to do so using as a hybrid model as long as the meeting is quorate for decision making
4. Look at the feasibility of meeting outside where Members, staff and the public can socially distance effectively

The Clerk outlined statutory matters which are required to be undertaken at the Annual Town Council meeting and that this must be held in May. The Main Hall can be laid out to accommodate all Councillors in accordance with social distancing measures, but due to other bookings this would only be available on Wednesday 19th May.

Cllr Patrick: How can the public be included in face to face meetings?

The Clerk advised that public attendance can still be facilitated virtually until 21st June.

Cllr Cox: Town Council meetings must be done in person which has been confirmed by the Monitoring Officer.

Cllr Stokes proposed the following:

The Council meets outdoors once the rule of 6 is removed on 17th May to facilitate the annual meeting on 19th May and other matters which require urgent attention and then suspend other meetings until Monday 21st June or beyond depending upon the removal of restrictions. To agree other matters in face to face meetings if quorate or continue to meet outside. To send a letter to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Communities outlining our objections highlighting that we are not an exceptional case and should be able to continue to meet safely. The outdoor meeting scheduled for 19th May will publicise our objections and that we should not be operating under a different set of rules to the rest of the public.

Cllr Clarke: Other crucial decisions can be deferred until after 21st June.

Decision: Cllr Cox proposed that the Council meets outdoors once the rule of 6 is removed on 17th May and suspend meetings to 21st June or beyond when safe to do so which was seconded by Cllr Clarke with all Members in favour. Additional meetings will only be held to agree statutory business with the minimum number of people to be quorate or continue to hold meetings outside.

Action: Cllr Cox also proposed writing objections to Robert Jenrick MP – Cllr Stokes to draft a letter and circulate for approval

21/41. To receive and note the following:

- Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21 – noted
- Accounting Statement of the Annual Return 2020/21 – approved and signed by the Chair and Clerk.
- Exercise of Public Rights commencing on 3rd June 2021 and ending on 14th July 2021 - noted

21/42. To approve the renewal of the Town Council's insurance policy:

The Clerk confirmed that the current policy is a long-term agreement until 2025. Approved

21/43. CCTV Update:

The Clerk reported that the decommissioning work will be undertaken on Thursday 27th May and conveyed her thanks to the Town Ranger for his assistance in arranging this.

21/44. Retirement of Devon County Councillor Stuart Barker:

Cllr Phillips: Cllr Stuart Barker is retiring as Chair of Devon County Council after 26 years of service to the community. She suggested a joint presentation with Ashburton Town Council who are arranging a collection, a buffet, and a presentation on Monday 5th July. Buckfastleigh councillors are invited to this. Cllrs Phillips, Cox and Kohler-Ockmore will attend.

21/45. Chair's Announcements: None

21/46. Councillor updates regarding matters relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Cox reported that the newly formed Buckfastleigh Action for Nature Group which will be managing some of the town's verges with the support of the Town Council was recently launched.

Cllr Clarke was pleased to confirm that Gary Quest the new Town Ranger has been taken on permanently.

Cllr Phillips raised concerns about the number of potholes that are not repaired which are often within the vicinity of those that are.

Cllr Kohler-Ockmore: The first meeting of the Tourism forum facilitated by the Town Council was well attended and it was agreed to return to quarterly meetings, so that organisations have the opportunity to provide updates. The next meeting has been scheduled for early July.

Cllr Cox: The Orchard Millennium Green Tea Hut will re-open at the end of May.

Cllr Clarke: There will be a Dog Show on Saturday 15th May at the Sports Club.

Cllr. Patrick suggested that the Town Hall Wildspace Garden is entered into the RHS Britain in Bloom competition. Group to liaise with the Clerk.

21/47. Items requiring Urgent Attention: None

21/48. Summary of Key Messages:

Clerk to liaise with the Chair.

Cllrs Parker Khan, Nutley and Somme left the meeting at 8.03pm and the Chair moved the meeting into a Part II session to discuss one item of confidential business.

21/49. Part II (private session)

The meeting returned to Part I and closed at 8.22pm.