

# BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

---

## **Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022 at 7.30pm.**

**Present:** Councillors: Sue Clarke (Chair), Caroline Bach-Price, John Bailey, Huw Cox, Ron Fox, Mark Jeffreys, Sylvee Phillips., Kathy Taylor, Leigh Walker-Haworth, and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

**In attendance:** 45 members of the public and Councillor John Nutley (Teignbridge District Council - TDC)

**Press:** None

**22/64. Apologies for absence:** Cllrs David Patrick and Erin Kohler-Ockmore

**22/65. Councillors invited to declare any interests:**

Cllr Fox re Agenda item 22/67 – Dispensation to speak as a trustee with a controlling interest in the Victoria Park Charity

**22/66. Newly Co-opted Town Councillors welcome:**

Three new councillors were welcomed by the Chair and enrolled by the Clerk.

**22/67. Presentation by the Chair and trustees of Victoria Park and Buckfastleigh Swimming Pool:**

Pam Barrett (Chair), Dan Simpson, Phil Northcott and Alasdair James were present to represent Victoria Park. The presentation and discussion was led by Pam Barrett. The swimming pool was built in 1887 for the benefit of the town and is a charity run by a group of trustees. Numerous community assets were built around this time. When the pool and the park were taken over by TDC as part of the local government reorganisation over time they said it was beyond repair, not used and too expensive to run. When threatened with closure several individuals formed a group to take on the pool and park and submitted a funding bid to Sport England for £75,000 which was successful. The transfer was a long and difficult process until they took over the pool, park, skate park and lease for the youth centre in 2014. Historically most swimming pools are run by councils due to the high level of risk involved.

The group successfully secured a second grant for £250,000 and other funds came in over time including an annual contribution from the Town Council. All staff are employed, the pool is well-used, and activities are provided throughout the year in addition to the summer opening period. It is estimated that the energy bill of £9,000 will increase to £30,000 in 2023 due to increasing energy costs.

The Town Council has provided a perennial grant of £20,000+ for 4 years and this is the final year for this term. The pool has funds for 2022 but not 2023 when it would have to close. The trustees would have to drain the pool due to the danger of leaving an unsupervised body of water which would lead to the deterioration of the walls.

The charity has asked the Town Council to meet the shortfall, paid for by an increase in council tax which is estimated to be 50p per week. The pool supports people with disabilities and families, and 4 schools use it. From December 2022 there will be no-one to run the pool. They

are asking for the Town Council to consult with the community prior to setting the budget for next year.

*A member of the public asked whether this will be end of the Trust?*

Dan Simpson: If the community wants the Trust to continue, then this may happen, but it must be a more viable asset. Trustees are not happy about decommissioning as volunteers may resign.

Pam Barrett: It would cost a lot of money to decommission. There would be no staff, no insurance and a huge risk.

Dan Simpson: The pool is currently always well-staffed, with high standards and is well known nationally.

*A member of the public asked if the whole site would be closed?*

Pam Barrett: It would need another organisation to take it over. The trustees use local companies and employ local people.

Fanny Jackson as Chair of The Bungalow Youth Project refuted the ascertain that youth provision was being taken away in 2014.

Pam Barrett: Funded youth provision has gone. The only TDC pools still in operation are at Newton Abbot, Dawlish and Teignmouth, which Buckfastleigh council tax goes to support.

Fanny Jackson: The Bungalow is rented from Victoria Park. What will happen with youth provision if this is closed?

Pam Barrett: If Victoria Park and the pool continue to remain open, they will need another £40,000 from the Town Council.

Dan Simpson: They know that this is a big ask, that is why the trust want to consult the community.

*Member of the public: A wide demographic use the pool and it is an excellent outdoor facility.*

*Member of the public: The trust needs to approach the other local authorities and our MP and take it to parliament.*

Cllr Nutley: Ashburton Town Council does not fund its swimming pool to this extent.

Pam Barrett: TDC has a £1.2 million leisure budget but much of this goes to the key urban areas such as Newton Abbot. Writing to higher authorities will not save the pool. Other pools who do not have paid staff run with a degree of risk.

*Member of the public: TDC gave the pool away as they know pools run at a loss.*

Pam Barrett: The trustees have met with other pools, Active Devon, and Sport England. Staffing models could be looked at and heat source pumps and solar panels are used elsewhere. The pool has 2 excellent modern gas boilers but 300,000 litres of water goes through the filtration system every hour and this is powered by electricity. They could change to saline from chlorine, which is now very expensive and becoming difficult to source. There is also a shortage of supply for alternative heating.

*Member of public: Where else has funding been sought and looked at?*

Pam Barrett: It is possible to get capital funding but not revenue to cover the day to day running of the pool. The real cost of a ticket is £11 per person. They get grant funding for the free sessions and funding streams are the schools and the tuck shop. £10,000 was paid for the hoist to make the pool more inclusive but it costs £600 to service annually.

Pam Barrett and Judith Hart explained how the Town Council precept is set and how the community is consulted regarding any proposed increase to the council tax. Judith explained that estimated figures will have to be adjusted to account for the tax base which is set by TDC later in the year and that not all households pay the full amount of council tax. Many households receive a discount or are in receipt of council tax benefit which reduces the amount of revenue coming in. Judith also referred to the different types of consultation that could be used for this purpose including a parish poll which would be funded by the Town Council.

Victoria Park will consult with the community but is asking the Town Council to consult too and particularly the harder to reach households who do not always vote. Their consultation will run from the end of July to December.

*Member of public: Does the Town Council have any other priorities?*

The Clerk: We currently do not have any new priorities but are committed to various initiatives such as environmental projects, the youth strategy, and the effects of climate change some of which have not progressed due to the impact of the pandemic.

Cllr Clarke: The Youth Strategy is a priority and Buckfastleigh is one of the few parish councils who have one. Young people want more activities. We do have other sports facilities which are not for profit and struggle financially.

*Member of the public: It is important for children to learn to swim. Are there any NHS funds available?*

Pam Barrett: There is social prescribing funding, but this does not benefit pool revenue.

The Clerk: The Town Council is not bound by the result of a consultation or a vote.

Cllr Cox: This has been a verbal presentation; documentation is needed to back this up as well as further discussion.

Cllr Phillips expressed concern that apparently anyone can contact the pool to arrange for free tickets and that eligibility is not checked.

Cllr Clarke reiterated that free swimming is paid through grant funding and not subsidised by pool revenue and would not expect people to be means tested.

Cllr Bailey summarised that the Town Council's decision will be based on community consultation or a poll. He supports the pool but needs to see evidence of what has been presented tonight. There are very little leisure facilities in the town and people need to consider what would Victoria Park in the centre of the town look like in decay? We must act on behalf of the community.

Cllr Clarke: There are also costs to running a park.

A member of the public asked everyone present who would be willing to pay extra to fund Victoria Park by a show of hands. The majority of those present indicated that they would agree to paying an additional amount through the council tax.

All members of the public left after item 22/67.

**22/68. To approve and sign the minutes from the Town Council Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and review actions from this meeting:**

Signed by Cllr Clarke

**Actions:**

- **22/46:** Cllr Clarke has spoken to Gordon Searle – there will be a weekend ceremony to celebrate the new Town Clock.
- **22/46:** Meeting with the Scouts pending.
- **22/50:** Cllr Taylor has submitted comments to Dartmoor National Park regarding the A38 Corridor Access Review.
- **22/54:** Cllr Cox will arrange a beating of the bounds in 2023 and will circulate the DALC newsletter

**22/69. To receive and note the minutes of the Tourism and Recreation Committee held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022:**

Noted.

Cllrs Taylor and Walker-Haworth agreed to join this committee.

**22/70. Questions and comments from the public:** No members of the public present.

**22/71. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:**

Cllr Cox: TDC Members attended a site inspection at Strode Road and are looking at the future of community pools and how these are funded.

**22/72. Budget Analysis Report 01.06.22 – 30.06.22:** Approved

**22/73. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statements 01.06.22 – 30.06.22:** Approved

**22/74. Multi-Pay Card Statements April 2022 to June 2022:** Approved

**22/75. Quarterly Bank Reconciliation April 2022 to June 2022:** Approved

**22/76. Annual review of Town Council Standing Orders:** The Clerk confirmed that no amendments are required.

**Decision:** Resolved unanimously.

**22/77. Chair's Announcements:**

Cllr Clarke attended the Ashburton and Buckfastleigh Rotary Club Art Exhibition at Buckfast Abbey which has returned after a two-year absence due to Covid.

The Scouts and Beavers AGM was held at the Football Club at the weekend. There are currently 80 children on the waiting list.

Cllr Clarke has been informed by the police that community policing is dictated by the number of reports made to 101 with reference to the illegal encampment at the football ground.

Cllr Cox has contacted the TDC Monitoring Officer and met with heads of department. Notices have had not been followed up. A new notice was served last week, and they have 14 days to quit. If they still refuse to move TDC will obtain a court order, but individuals can return after 12 months.

**22/78. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:**

Cllr Cox attended Buckfastleigh Residents' Association AGM. They are concerned about speeding.

Cllr Bach-Price asked about re-surfacing the tennis court – advised it will cost £20,000 to do this and that the site is managed by TDC.

The Football Club would like to take over the club, pitch and surrounding facilities if an asset transfer from TDC is permitted.

Cllr Cox left the meeting at 9.00pm.

Cllr Phillips attended a DNP Forum meeting on Wednesday 6 July. A funding bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support initiatives in gateway towns to the Moor was discussed. Be Buckfastleigh also gave a presentation looking at a more joined up approach between town and parish councils for rural funding.

Cllrs Taylor and Cllr Clarke carried out a site visit by cycling the path from Buckfastleigh to Ashburton regarding the Cycle South Dartmoor project to safely link a cycle route from South Brent to Ashburton.

**22/79. Items requiring urgent attention:**

The Chair called an Extraordinary Meeting to be held at 7.00pm on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> August in the Town Hall to discuss the Town Council's initial response to the Victoria Park charity request

Meeting closed at 9.15 pm.