

# BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

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## **Minutes of the Extraordinary Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022 at 7.00pm.**

**Present:** Councillors: Sue Clarke (Chair), Erin Kohler-Ockmore, Huw Cox, Mark Jeffreys, David Patrick, Sylvee Phillips, Kathy Taylor, and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

Cllr John Bailey to arrive later in the meeting.

**Press:** None

**22/81. Apologies for absence:** Cllrs Ron Fox and Leigh Walker-Haworth. No apologies received from Caroline Bach-Price.

### **22/82. Councillors invited to declare any interests:**

Cllrs Phillips and Fox re Agenda item 22/84 – The Bungalow Project (SP) and Victoria Park (RF) – trustees

**22/83. Questions and comments from the public:** None

### **22/84. Request to increase the annual payment to the Victoria Park charity to meet the increasing costs of Buckfastleigh Swimming Pool:**

A final decision will be made at the autumn budget meeting. The Victoria Park perennial grant application is due by the end of August. Victoria Park is currently undertaking a consultation in the town via events in partnership with Participate Arts. Energy use figures are posted on social media. Gas to heat the pool and electricity for the pump. The estimated cost is a 66p per week increase for Band B Council Tax households.

Cllr Patrick: Concerned that the public will be paying a tax to use the pool.

Cllr Clarke confirmed that the pool receives grants to fund free swims.

Cllr Phillips: Concern regarding the amount spent on Hello Summer which is also partially funded by the Town Council.

Cllr Clarke: Some of this funding is used for pool and park activities.

Cllr Cox: Currently no accounts or documents have been received to evidence what has been said and therefore no decision should be made in principle to support a rise to the council tax. Residents are struggling financially, and the Town Council's budget needs a review because other groups in the town will also need help.

Cllr Clarke agreed there will be other requests but what will happen to such a significant space in the centre of the town if the pool is forced to close?

Cllr Cox: The charity constitution states that Victoria Park and pool must be transferred to another charity or organisation with similar interests. The trustees cannot simply walk away as they are responsible for clearing the debts. It is not the responsibility of the Town Council to take over Victoria Park.

Cllr Phillips does not want to see pool closed but no other pool in Teignbridge is funded to such an extent. She also questioned the amount spent on salaries and why volunteers are not used?

Cllr Clarke: The pool is a local employer providing jobs and training including a lifeguard training scheme.

Cllr Kohler-Ockmore referred to the threatened closure of the library but that has survived without Town Council funding. The energy problem is exceptional and may worsen over time.

Cllr Clarke: There are also running costs for the park and skate park.

Cllr Cox: The only significant cost is the pool.

Cllr Clarke: The trust is also a local employer.

Cllr Cox: Would like to see a de-carbonisation plan for the pool.

The Clerk explained that the different options for consulting the community but has never found that questionnaires and organised events have had a sufficient response to determine the feelings of residents. Despite the significant cost a parish poll would be a fairer assessment of opinion as it would give all the electorate to answer yes or no to one question which would be set by the Town Council.

This discussion moved into the next agenda item.

**22/85. Process of community consultation to determine the views of the parish with respect to a proposed increase to the 2023/24 Council Tax bill:**

Discussed how a parish poll can be called and agreed that there is enough time to organise following receipt of the Victoria Park perennial application.

Cllr Cox highlighted hardship relief and the pressure on food bank funds to meet demand.

Cllr Bailey arrived at 7.35 pm.

**Decision:** Cllr Clarke gave a summary of what had been discussed and agreed that Members need to see the actual figures, grant application, and consult with the community. Resolved.

It was suggested to have a representative of Victoria Park such as the treasurer to explain the accounts at the September meeting when the perennial grant application is discussed. The swimming pool is open from the end of May to early September, so the amount of funds requested is proportionate high, but it is open at other times for specific events and use. It was confirmed that Teignbridge District Council only run 3 pools and the rest are run by community groups.

**22/86. Proposal by Dartmoor National Park Authority to include Buckfastleigh in a Heritage Lottery Fund bid to obtain funding to pilot a Gateway Town project:**

DNP has identified Buckfastleigh as one of four towns within the Park or on the boundary as part of a Gateway Towns pilot in partnership with other organisations such as the Environment Agency, South West Water and Sustrans. If successful, the project will look at the visitor journey and the access offer surrounding the town linking directly to its heritage such as the development of walking and cycling routes and the promotion of tourism.

**Action:** Clerk to send a letter of support on behalf of the Chair and the Town Council supporting the Stage 1 bid by Friday 5<sup>th</sup> August.

**22/87. Items requiring urgent attention:** None

Meeting closed at 8.20 pm.