

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 16th November 2022 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: Sue Clarke (Chair), John Bailey, Huw Cox, Ron Fox, David Patrick, Sylvee Phillips, and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

Press: None

In attendance: 29 members of the public and 2 representatives of the Environment Agency

22/140. Apologies for absence: Cllrs Erin Kohler-Ockmore, Mark Jefferys, Leigh Walker-Haworth, and John Nutley (Teignbridge District Council).

No apologies received from Cllr Caroline Bach-Price

22/141. Councillors invited to declare any interests:

Cllr Clarke declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Moorland Community Care Group grant application

22/142. To approve and sign the minutes from the Town Council Meeting held on 19th October 2022 and review actions from this meeting:

Signed by Cllr Clarke

Actions:

- The Warm Spaces initiative is now up and running.
- Cllr Cox to meet with the member of the public shortly who raised various issues at the October meeting.
- South Devon Railway planning application site visit. Cllr Patrick supports this application and does not feel a site visit is needed.
- The free community Christmas meals have been advertised.

22/143. To receive and note the minutes of the Tourism and Recreation Committee held on 12th October:

Noted

The Chair moved the meeting to Agenda Item No. 5

22/144. Questions and comments from the public:

It was noted that the most of the public present wanted to discuss the results of the Parish Poll although there will be further opportunity later in the meeting.

Member of the Public: *Were the votes sent by email counted too?*

Cllr Clarke: Votes sent by email were recorded but are not official votes.

Meetings are being arranged with representatives of Victoria Park and The Bungalow regarding their perennial grant applications. A budget meeting will be scheduled in early December which will be open to the public.

Member of public: *The park is very important to the wellbeing of the town but did not feel the difference in the results of the vote was significant.*

Cllr Clarke: The Town Council acknowledges the current issues in Buckfastleigh and is mindful of the cost-of- living increase and its effect on residents.

Phil Northcott, a Victoria Park Trustee, asked about the Town Council's reserves and surplus.

The Clerk explained that enough reserves must be retained to keep the Council functioning in the event of an emergency but due to a lack of capacity and the impact of the pandemic, funding reserved for some projects has not been used so there is a surplus.

Cllr Clarke: It is understood that Victoria Park has a reserve to decommission the charity if needed and the Charity Commission will work with the trustees to achieve this.

Member of public: *If the pool closes, does the park close?*

Cllr Patrick: It only closes until another organisation is found or another use is identified for the land but not in the long term. The Town Council needs to look at all options, but the trustees make the decision as to what happens.

The trustees would have to engage a charity lawyer and meet the requirements of due diligence.

Cllr Fox: The Trust is in talks with the Charity Commission lawyers.

Member of public: *Will the Town Council ignore the results of the Poll?*

Cllr Clarke: The Council wanted to open the decision up to the opinion of the public which is why it was decided to have a Parish Poll.

Phil Northcott asked why the other two perennial grants were not included in the poll?

Cllr Clarke: The Town Council is obligated to support the Town Hall as the trustee.

Cllr Patrick: Neither the Town Hall nor the Bungalow requested the poll, the Chair of the Victoria Park Trust did.

Cllr Phillips: Will the pool be viable in the long run? Victoria Park is requesting £250,000 when we are having warm spaces and people are suffering hardship.

Cllr Clarke: The Town Council needs to meet all our obligations if possible.

Phil Northcott: *The pool is facing a 70% increase in energy costs.*

22/145. Launch of new Flood Warning Service:

Liz Taylor and Corrinne Ellis from the Environment Agency (EA) gave a PowerPoint presentation to the meeting which will be uploaded to social media for information.

The new Flood Warning Service will be live on Wednesday 7th December and will be incorporated with the existing Town Council community emergency plan and flood group.

The EA are looking at arranging a community event in the New Year in the Town Hall.

A member of public asked for Flood Warning training.

The Environment Agency works with Devon Communities to facilitate training.

Property flood resilience – no funding available at the present time but that can change.

Member of public asked re liaison with Devon Highways – blocked drains are often the cause of flooding and asked the EA to advocate on behalf of Buckfastleigh.

Cllr Clarke: The river Dart is one of the fastest rising rivers in the UK.

EA: Dartmoor National Park Authority is looking at upland management too and presented this project at the recent Green Fair hosted by the Town Council.

Action: Cllr Patrick to share this presentation with the Flood Group Facebook page.

The Chair returned the meeting to the public session. The EA representatives and some members of the public left.

22/146. Questions and comments from the public:

No further questions.

22/147. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting.

Cllr Cox: Teignbridge District Council (TDC) budgets are currently under discussion. There is a staff shortage in both waste collection and planning. The Future High Street fund for Newton Abbot – a government grant for £9.2m has been awarded. A new TDC lottery for charities is now available on the website.

22/148. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:

None.

22/149. To note feedback from Parish Poll results and receive public comments:

Member of public: *Result of poll is yes. Will the Council abide by this?*

Cllr Clarke: Ignore democracy at your peril!

Member of public: *Why does the park have to be insured?*

Cllr Fox: An annual safety inspection is required by law.

Member of public: *Recreation is important, but you can go for a walk and trip.*

Cllr Patrick: The park cannot be left uninsured due to the risk of injury.

Member of public: *Issue of propaganda on Facebook – clearly states that the park will close if the pool closes but this may not be the case.*

Cllr Phillips: The Articles of Association states that the trustees need to find another charity to take over Victoria Park if there is risk of closure.

Cllr Bailey: Currently there are no other offers are on the table. If there is no support for the pool, then it will be difficult to carry on with the park so will close both and then there is the issue of access to The Bungalow. The Football Club electric bill has tripled. It is impossible to predict what will happen.

The Town Council has no control over Victoria Park at present but due to the sum of money requested, the Council would need more control and oversight. Town Council grants have also helped raise money for the park.

Cllr Clarke explained the process with the budget and that the Council will return to the pre-Covid decision making process. During this time, there were no perennial grant applications which are

up to 4 years, existing perennial grants had not reached the end of their term and the precept was not raised.

Member of public: *Why can't the pool be run with volunteers and was closed during Covid?*

Phil Northcott: There are 13 paid employees on a rota to manage the pool and park. This money feeds back into the community. Funds are now needed for energy.

Cllr Fox: TDC ran the pool at an annual cost of £40,000 with 3,000 swims per year there are now 10,000 swims.

Member of public: *I used to teach people to swim but I voted "No."*

Member of public: *20% bothered to vote but not the rest of the town. Everyone loves the pool but cannot afford to use it. Ticket prices are still high, and many users come from Dartington. This will mean a 30% increase to the Council Tax and yet we still must pay to use it.*

Cllr Clarke: We also pay Council Tax to TDC which is used to fund TDC owned pools.

Member of public: *It will never be sustainable.*

Clerk clarified that the precept will not stay high if it is not needed.

Cllr Fox: The trustees are looking at capital grants to fund a different source of energy for the pool.

22/150. To consider Smaller Grant Applications:

- (i) **Moorland Community Care Group:** Cllr Clarke had attended an AGM. It was noted that this group has substantial funds but also provides a wide range of support and activities to the elderly and vulnerable across a large area including Buckfastleigh.

Decision: Cllr Cox proposed £500 which was seconded by Cllr Clarke. 4 members voted in favour with 2 against – vote carried. It was agreed that a representative of the group should be invited to a Town Council meeting if another application is submitted.

- (ii) **Pokemon Club:** The club takes donations rather than subscriptions to help lower income families and are currently setting up a community interest company.

Decision: As no bank statements were provided it was agreed to defer to the December meeting and invite the applicant to attend.

- (iii) **Woolly Nanas:** Following the first application in 2021 it was noted that a bank account has still not been opened and there is no evidence of other funding being sought.

Decision: It was agreed to invite the applicant to the next meeting and defer this decision. The Town Council will however consider paying venue costs if evidence of a bank account is provided.

22/151. Requirement to appoint Town Council trustees for the Buckfastleigh Relief in Need Charity:

The Clerk explained that the Council was not aware of this charity or its constitution as it had previously been managed by the vicar of St. Luke's Church who has moved to another parish.

Action: Invite trustees to discuss further but defer due to the pending election in May 2023.

22/152. To receive the Teignbridge Citizens Advice Buckfastleigh Outreach Activity report July to September 2022:

Report noted and thanks conveyed for the continued advice and support provided to residents. Cllr Clarke explained that the Citizens Advice service runs a weekly video booth in the Town Hall and a monthly service is available in the community hub in St. Luke's Church.

22/153. To receive the Annual Report and thank you letter from the Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement Project (TRAYE):

Report noted. Cllr Clarke has spoken recently to TRAYE who are still looking at a joined-up approach between the three youth organisations in the town. It is understood that a second meeting will be arranged. Cllrs Clarke and Cox support the suggestion that the Town Council creates one pot of funding divided between the three organisations which gives them autonomy to spend how it is needed.

22/154. To discuss membership of the Devon Association of Local Councils:

DALC provides impartial advice and training for Town and Parish Councillors.

Decision: Cllr Cox proposed renewing membership immediately which was seconded by Cllr Clark with all Members in favour. Clerk to action.

22/155. Budget Analysis Report 01.10.22-31.10.22: Noted

22/156. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.10.22-31.10.22: Noted

22/157. Chair's Announcements: None

22/158. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Clarke reported that sadly Cllr Kathy Taylor had passed away this month and that she will be missed by the Town Council.

There was a Remembrance service at St. Luke's Church and Holy Trinity War Memorial on Sunday 13th November.

Cllr Patrick read out a letter of resignation as a Member of the Town Council due to moving house and prompted by recent events.

Cllr Fox advised that he has resigned from Victoria Park as a trustee but will continue to be a volunteer.

22/159. Items requiring urgent attention:

An Extraordinary Finance meeting will be arranged shortly.

22/160. Summary of Key Messages:

Clerk to summarise.

Meeting closed at 9.20 pm.