

# BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

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**Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2023 at 7.00pm.**

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

**In attendance:** 8 members of the public

**Press:** None

**23/95. Apologies for absence:** Cllrs Emma Fitzpatrick and Leigh Walker-Haworth

**23/96. Councillors invited to declare any interests:** None

**23/97. To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and review actions from these meetings:**

Signed by Cllr Cox.

**Actions:**

- The No Alcohol Designation Zone which covered Buckfastleigh town centre is out of date. Cllr Cox is pursuing this with Teignbridge District Council.
- The Town Council has supported the proposal for a 3-bedroom detached self-build house at Tweenaways.
- Cllr Cox's response to the Buckfastleigh Community Forum Whitecleave Quarry letter has been sent.

The Chair moved the meeting to Agenda item no. 5:

**23/98. Questions and comments from the public:** All questions from the public present were in relation to Agenda item no. 4 – see below.

**23/99. Proposal 7.6 of the Dartmoor National Park Local Plan – Land at Timbers Road, Buckfastleigh – review of public consultation evening by Dave Seaton of PCL Planning Ltd, Exeter:**

Cllr Cox advised the meeting that Dave Seaton will not be in attendance on this occasion to enable feedback directly to the Town Councillors.

Cllr Phillips is aware of public concern, especially as the land is not within the Buckfastleigh parish. The benefit will be for Dean Prior and South Hams, but the residents will use Buckfastleigh facilities. The proposed widening of the road at the site is quite steep. The application has come through very quickly.

Member of the public: There is considerable concern regarding flooding and the existing wildlife. Riverford is using this land for organic farming now – it will be covered in hard surfaces. Removing the wall will worsen the flooding as demonstrated by the removal of walls further up.

Cllr Fox: Water management should improve – mitigation is required.

Cllr Cox: The public should be encouraged to submit their own comments to Dartmoor National Park.

Cllr Clarke arrived at 7.12pm

Cllr Cox: As a Council, we must make valid planning points, the fact that the land is used for organic farming is not a legitimate planning objection.

Member of the public: The Highways proposal seems to be the most problematic as it does not take account of the effects of climate change. There are already issues with flooding and blockages due to leaves and debris.

Member of the public: Ground infiltration is a major concern.

Members of the public: There is also the potential risk of flooding to other properties. The current flow of water is not captured by the drains and this site will increase the flow. How will this be mitigated against?

Member of the public: There is poor technical feedback which will not stand up. Told by PCL staff at the consultation evening that no developer has been engaged and yet the Managing Director of PCL is also the director of a property development company.

Member of the public: The last Housing Needs survey was in 2014 so it is not up to date and only refers to Devon Home Choice as the data they are using.

Cllr Clarke: How will the s106 work as the site is in the South Hams? Informed they do not have to have a s106 as they are meeting the affordable housing target of 45%.

Member of the public: Concern re increased traffic flow.

Member of the public: People will use Fairy Lane and Duckspound Road to access the town which already has restricted access.

Cllr Clarke: Shared ownership is not always affordable.

Member of the public: Residents will not benefit from this development – it will be the size of a village.

Cllr Cox: Two applications are being considered:

1. Widening of the road - there are severe drainage issues and the route chosen is the easiest access to the site. 70+ houses will generate a substantial increase in traffic up a narrow road as people will choose the quickest route to the school, shops, doctors etc. A better highways assessment is needed. Other access alternatives should be considered. These are the main concerns for the access application.

2. Housing - s106 payments will go to South Hams and not Teignbridge and will not benefit Buckfastleigh. Allocation of properties: will this include Buckfastleigh residents? The housing needs number is out of date and inaccurate as it includes Ashburton and surrounding villages. How is this going to work? Need clarity. The parish boundary cannot be changed in the short term.

Cllr Bailey: Dean Prior Parish Council are having the same conversation although it will affect Buckfastleigh more. Any change to the boundary would have to be approved by the Secretary of State and would need significant support from the community.

Cllr Cox: The DNP Local Plan target is for 65 new dwellings a year, but this is not fixed.

Member of the public: Questions re wildlife surveys which are minimal.

Cllr Cox: This application has been pushed through too quickly. We need more housing of the right

type and in the right location. We are not sure that it is the best option for the town. Section 106 agreements are not looked at until after outline planning application is approved. It is a major development so needs to go to DNP committee and not a delegated decision. Due to lack of clarification of certain matters, this application should be deferred.

Member of the public: What powers does the Town Council have to ensure this is the right development?

Cllr Cox: Written representation and 5 minutes at the meeting.

Cllr Phillips: The Town Council are not a planning authority and have no powers re this development.

Member of the public: We need a new Housing Needs Assessment.

Cllr Cox: It costs approximately £5,000 and only the survey is only valid for 3 years. A Neighbourhood Plan is also only relevant when needed.

Member of the public: There are dormice in the hedgerows which are due to be removed.

Cllr Clarke: There is also evidence of lizards in the past.

Member of the public: No reptile survey was undertaken in the application. Concern re removal of trees.

Cllr Cox: Please comment on the application as a resident. It will not affect the hedge behind Tweenaways. The Town Council response will be published on our website. Too many issues need to be clarified before the Town Council can support or not.

**Action:** Cllr Cox to draft a response with reference to the comments received this evening and liaise with the Clerk.

### **23/100. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:**

Refurbishment of the tennis courts: Work was due to start on 14<sup>th</sup> August, but nothing has happened yet. Some councillors are unhappy that Teignbridge District Council (TDC) did not permit an asset transfer to the Town Council so the opportunity for a multi-sports facility has been lost and there has been no consultation with the community. Some Members feel that the response from the TDC councillor was dismissive and unsatisfactory.

Cllr Clarke: There is concern regarding use, maintenance, and the risk of vandalism.

Cllr Georghiades asked Cllr Cox to raise this at TDC, even though it is a “done deal”. The Town Council’s discontent with TDC should be noted.

Cllr Bailey: The refurbishment of the tennis courts does not include any other facilities or coaching.

There has been no further progress with the proposal for a mobile Post Office service. The expectation that the Town Council and neighbouring Parishes could fund this is not possible because we are not permitted to fund businesses.

### **23/101. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:**

Covered under Item 23/99.

**23/102. To note the first meeting of the Youth Forum held on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023, to review and discuss the revised Buckfastleigh Youth Strategy document and the proposal for a new youth provision community consultation exercise:**

Cllr Clarke will start a youth consultation in the autumn. There will be a questionnaire to all the youth groups to gather views as to what they would like in the town. The Youth Strategy will be updated to reflect the results of this consultation.

**23/103. Town Council 2024/25 budget setting community consultation update:**

A working party has met to discuss the consultation which will be held on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> September at 7.00pm in the Town Hall. Cllr Clarke suggested a councillor surgery on Fore Sreet. to support this, and a Saturday morning was suggested. Cllrs Clarke, Phillips, and Cox volunteered to do this.

**23/104. Response to the Rural Affordable Homes in Teignbridge Survey:**

Clerk to complete and submit online.

**23/105. Teignbridge Citizens Advice Buckfastleigh Outreach Activity Report April to June 2023 and review of service in the Town Hall:**

Cllr Georghiades noted a funding shortfall. The Food Bank did have a specific service but now it is open to all at St. Luke's Church. The duplicate service at the Town Hall is no longer being used.

**Decision:** Clerk to contact Citizens Advice and suggest we continue to fund the service but not at the Town Hall and look at increasing funds in the future.

**23/106. Budget Analysis Report 01.07.23 – 31.07.23:** Noted

**23/107. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statements 01.07.23 – 31.07.23:** Noted

**23/108. Chair's Announcements:**

The bench outside Searles has been removed due to its unsafe condition. The Clerk suggested that as the identical bench outside The Seed will also require removal in the near future it would be prudent to replace both at the same time to avoid additional carriage costs.

**Decision:** Members unanimously approved expenditure for 2 recycled backless benches.

Complaints regarding incidents of anti-social behaviour at the Chapel Street bench opposite the Coop are now being dealt with by the police and the TDC anti-social behaviour officer.

**23/109. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:**

Cllr Georghiades asked about the Town Hall cinema.

The Clerk explained that the equipment is no longer working, cannot be repaired and is costly to replace, but it is hoped that the cinema can return when funds allow.

Cllr Clarke: A resident with mobility issues hit her head due to a sign sticking out from Mandela House. This has been reported to Dartmoor Nation Park but to date there has been no response.

Both Cllrs Cox and Clarke have been invited to the Twinning event in the Town Hall which will welcome dignitaries and residents from our twin town in Fontaine-Henry in Normandy.

Cllr Phillips attended a Bungalow Youth Project meeting. She was pleased to report that one of the youth workers who is from Buckfastleigh has just attained Level 3 certification.

It was suggested to invite the Police Youth Intervention Officer to the next Youth Forum meeting.

Devon County Council is running parenting work sessions at St. Luke's Church.

The Clerk advised that the recently awarded grant to Conversation Works has been refunded to the Town Council following a successful Lottery award.

Thank you letters have been received from the Friends of Buckfastleigh Library for the new library equipment grant and from the Twinning Association for a grant towards the twin town visit to Buckfastleigh at the end of the August.

**23/110. Summary of Key Messages:**

Clerk to action.

Meeting closed at 9.05 pm.