

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 18th October 2023 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors Huw Cox (Chair), Sue Clarke, John Bailey, Paul Georghiades, and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

In attendance: 5 members of the public

Press: None

23/130. Apologies for absence: Cllrs Sylvee Phillips, Emma Fitzpatrick, and Leigh Walker-Haworth.

No apologies received from Cllr Ron Fox

23/131. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

23/132. To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 20th September 2023 and review actions from these meetings:

Actions:

- 23/113 – No further update on the reinstatement of the No Alcohol Designation Zone in the town centre.
- 23/117 – District and County Councillor attendance at meetings - no response from Cllr Nutley, apologies received for September Town Council from Cllr Rogers and agreement from Cllr Parker Khan to attend if an online link is provided. Clerk to email Cllrs Rogers and Nutley again.
- 23/119 – The Clerk had written to Anthony Mangnall, MP for Totnes regarding the Community Project Access initiative to use local community buildings as police hubs which had referred to Buckfastleigh in correspondence but had received no response. Clerk to write to Mel Stride, MP for Mid-Devon.
- 23/120 – The Clerk had circulated a request to neighbouring parishes about the effects of decreased bus services and the impact on residents. No response from Ashburton Town Council or South Brent Parish Council. Response received from Dean Prior Parish Council. Cllr Clarke awaiting school data.

Minutes signed by Cllr Cox.

23/133. To receive the note the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 11th October 2023:

Noted. The Finance Committee members have proposed a small increase to the 2024/25 budget pending further calculations by the Clerk and recommendations to the November Town Council meeting. It was also highlighted that this year the Hello Summer programme had been reduced to 4 weeks due to the impact of funding cuts.

23/134. Questions and comments from the public: A member of the public asked why the Christmas meal home delivery is still being used and the Town Council has not returned to hosting a free meal on Christmas Day, when so many members of the community are alone and isolated?

The Clerk explained the lack of a suitable venue with adequate catering facilities, capacity, and volunteers. Many venues no longer open on Christmas Day or can afford to employ staff on this day.

Cllr Cox: Some groups now organise their own Christmas parties such as Moorland Community Caring and the Friendship Group.

A member of the public suggested doing it on a day earlier in December. Cllr Cox agreed to look at this again next year.

The new owner of Huccaby's on Fore Street may be able to offer this as a venue, but a risk assessment would be needed.

23/135. To consider a Smaller Grant Application deferred from the September meeting:

No representation from the Scout Group to discuss their application. The invitation to this meeting had been acknowledged by a member of the organisation. Without representation this application will not be considered.

23/136. To consider a Larger Grant Application:

Two larger grant applications for the Christmas Fair to fund the Victorian carousel hire and core costs such as insurance have been received. The new Chair of the Christmas Fair Committee was present.

The Christmas Fair is not a commercial fair, unlike in other towns. Local traders and organisations can have stalls at a low cost and make money. All the shops, pubs etc. stay open. Entertainment is free and a Victorian carousel is provided for £1 per ride. Residents from surrounding villages attend the fair too. Money raised from the ticket sales for the carousel is returned to the Town Council as a donation towards the original cost of hire. They also work with Camphill and provide exclusive use of the carousel before the fair.

Grand opening of the new The Land Barn Kitchen at Camphill from 5 to 7 pm on Tuesday 24th October. Cllr Clarke to attend on behalf of the Town Council.

23/137. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Cox: The amended Teignbridge Local Plan is now out for consultation which includes better house building standards and more stringent rules for developers. This document should go to the Planning Inspectorate in the New Year.

Cllr Cox: New on-street parking restrictions such as outside the Town Hall is decreasing the availability of parking for residents. He will raise this with Devon County Council and Teignbridge District Council. Parking charges have also increased.

The meeting held a general discussion about the car parks in the town and that parking in rural communities is an ongoing issue. It was suggested that this is highlighted to the Teignbridge District Council (TDC) Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Government funding to TDC has changed from every 4 years to 1 year so the authority is unable to plan into the future and have resorted to using reserves to top up expenditure which is not sustainable.

23/138. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:

Teignbridge District Council Housing Dept has submitted a strong objection to the proposed development at Timbers Road.

23/139. To review the Police Report for September 2023: Noted.

23/140. To receive feedback from the Town Council 2024/25 budget setting community consultation held on 27th September 2023 and to discuss how the Town Council communicates with the public:

It was noted that despite widespread advertising in different formats, attendance by the public was poor. This annual event is an opportunity for the Town Council to communicate with the community.

Cllrs Clarke and Phillips held a surgery in Fore Street in early September which was well attended. The main topics that arose were those which the Town Council has little control over for e.g. inadequate public transport, potholes, overgrown vegetation.

It was suggested that text message alerts could be another communication platform.

Suggestion to organise drop-in sessions in the afternoons when parents collect their children from school.

It is important to listen to the voices of the community and for the community to act.

Member of the public: The platform called 'Change.org' could be used to campaign for topics which people care about – with enough petition signatures an issue can be raised for debate in Parliament.

One of the main issues for Buckfastleigh is reduced public transport which limits access to employment and education opportunities. Commercial bus companies did receive subsidies for some routes, but these have been withdrawn. The more expensive the fares, the less the use.

Member of the public: Lift sharing could be promoted more as there is already wide membership through dedicated WhatsApp groups. Town Council events could be posted on these groups to reach a greater audience.

Cllr Clarke to represent the Town Council at the Be Buckfastleigh transport meeting on 26th October where recent bus timetable changes will be discussed.

23/141. Budget Analysis Report 01.09.23 – 30.09.23: Noted

23/142. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statements 01.09.23 – 30.09.23: Noted

The Clerk confirmed that the replacement benches for Fore Street had been ordered but due to the cost would be plain but practical.

23/143. Multi-Pay Card Statements July to September 2023: Noted

23/144. Quarterly Bank Reconciliation July 2023 to September 2023: Signed

23/145. Chair's Announcements:

A member of the public asked if some bicycle stands can be provided in one or more of the car parks.

Action: Cllr Cox to ask TDC if some stands can be provided for Buckfastleigh.

23/146. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Phillips gave a report from the Devon Association of Local Councils meeting she attended the previous week. Phil Shears, Managing Director, reported that TDC has a budget gap and needs to take measures to redress this. They are looking at ways of working collaboratively with local parish and town councils. (Presumably there is an expectation for THE Town Council to take on some services which will have an impact on future precept setting.) Mention was made that the public are not sure which council deals with what service; and how to raise awareness of this. There is a shortage of staff even though they advertise. There are currently five vacancies in the planning department.

Cllr Clarke is undertaking a new youth consultation. She has visited the Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement (TRAYE) project and the Moor Imagination Collective (MIC) initiative. Feedback included the provision of a gym, more shops, and sports activities within Buckfastleigh. Young people feel isolated. Cllr Clarke had also attended a Be Buckfastleigh Saturday Super Social at the Football Club where young people can relax and enjoy a range of activities.

The Youth Strategy will be brought to full Council for approval in due course.

Cllr Clarke also announced that Torquay United Football Club will be providing a programme of free coaching for 7- to 11-year-olds at the Football Club funded by the Town Council. If popular it is hoped that this pilot project will continue.

Cllr Georghiades: There is huge water run-off in the Barn Park area from pipe damage at the reservoir which should be noted.

23/147. Summary of Key Messages:

Clerk to action.

Meeting closed at 8.35 pm.