

# BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

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## **Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 7.00pm.**

**Present:** Councillors Sue Clarke (Chair), Paul Georghiadis, John Bailey, Steven Burch, Joanna De Groot-Marzec, Ron Fox, and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

**In attendance:** Niki Warner, Teignbridge District Council Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer and 3 members of the public.

**Press:** None

**24/222. Apologies for absence:** Cllrs Leigh Walker-Haworth and Sylvee Phillips. Cllrs John Nutley and Stuart Rogers (Teignbridge District Council)

**24/223. Councillors invited to declare any interests:** None

**24/224. Newly co-opted Town Councillor welcome:** Joanna De Groot-Marzec was welcomed as a new councillor and enrolled by the Town Clerk.

**24/225. To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024 and review actions from these meetings:**

Minutes signed by Cllr Clarke.

- Warm meal update – Easter meals will be delivered by Sue and Judith on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March.
- The new plaque for Room 3 in the Town Hall dedicated to Councillor Huw Cox is now in place.
- Information on how to contact the police and report incidents is available on the Town Council website and Facebook page.
- The Town Clerk responded to the appeal submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by the developer for the proposed development of 75 dwellings at Timbers Road.
- The Town Council's new Biodiversity policy is now available to view on the website.

**24/226. Niki Warner Teignbridge District Council Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer:**

Niki explained that part of her role is to promote community led initiatives and she is working with Devon Communities Together. The Town Council's Emergency Plan is a good example and well organised, but a shorter simplified version available in key locations such as the schools, church etc would also be useful. These could be in the form of cards explaining what the public can and cannot do and how to communicate with the press. This would create an extra layer of resilience.

Niki is responsible for community and business resilience. The environmental landscape is changing. Flash flooding is leading to a greater number of deaths and are more common from April to August due to the ground being harder and more impacted. A global power outage and wildfires are also a real risk. Wildfire forecasting is now being mapped for use by the emergency services and other authorities.

The Environment Agency have confirmed that they would facilitate an emergency exercise for

Buckfastleigh but there must be a minimum of 10 attendees to make this all-day event viable.

The Clerk explained that although the Town Council has a comprehensive plan and maintained equipment, it is very difficult to recruit and retain volunteers.

Niki agreed to send some information regarding recruitment and other useful resources that may be of help.

**24/227. Questions and comments from the public:**

Two new Directors from The Seed introduced themselves to the meeting. They would like to continue to have a community face and encourage residents to buy locally.

Members acknowledged that The Seed is an important and popular resource in the town.

**24/228. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:**

A report from Cllr John Nutley had been circulated to Members. It was noted that there had been a low response from Teignbridge residents to their budget consultation survey, but results indicate that priorities should focus on leisure, health and wellbeing, climate change and affordable housing. 76% of those who responded were in favour of a 2.99% increase in the council tax for 2024/25 and 64% agreed that affordable housing and employment should be a priority.

Teignbridge District Council only receives 8% of the total amount of council tax paid by each household. Devon County Council receives 72%, the Police, 12%, Fire Service 4% and a further 4% to Town and Parish Councils.

Cllr Clarke highlighted that 47% of Teignbridge residents live in rural communities but only 5% of the budget is spent on these areas and that there is a high dependency on revenue sought from increasing car parking charges. There is a by-election on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024.

**24/229. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:**

None

**24/230. To review the Police Report for February 2024:**

Noted

**24/231. To note the Christmas Fair 2023 End of Grant Report:**

Cllr Joanna De Groot-Marzec as Chair of the Christmas Fair Committee reported that the 2022 fair had high attendance because it was the first fair held after Covid. Figures for 2023 were less due to the extreme weather, but she estimated that there was still approx. 1,000 people.

£288 was raised from the carousel which continues to be a popular attraction funded by the Town Council.

Committee members have agreed that some activities would benefit from being held at a different time slots such as the auction as the heavy rain deterred some attendees. New ideas will be discussed at their next meeting and the Council was thanked for its continued financial support.

**24/232. Proposal for the Town Council to facilitate the annual display of Christmas Lights in the town centre update:**

The Clerk explained that the Council must follow due process to facilitate a new display, but this is taking much longer than anticipated as she is waiting for further information and costs from suppliers and installers.

Cllr Georghiades suggested that in the meantime the Town Council formally agrees to facilitate and partially fund a new display for Christmas 2024.

**Decision:** The above was proposed by Cllr Georghiades, seconded by Cllr Clarke with all Members in favour. Resolved

**24/233. To review ring-fenced reserves and surplus 2023/24 – to include funding options for the new town centre Christmas Lights:**

Councillors reviewed the report and resolved the following:

- The Town Hall refurbishment/repairs fund, Emergency Response fund and Victoria Park Energy Costs Grant to be transferred in full to the Business Reserve until required.
- £400 of the Town Clock fund, the remaining £313.37 of the Community Development Fund and the remaining £253.24 of the Parish Poll Payment to be transferred to the new Christmas Lights Fund which together with the £600 donation from the Christmas Fair and £850 from Huw Cox's Teignbridge Cllr Community Fund gives a total of £2,416.61 to carry forward.
- To continue to ring-fence the remaining amount in the Climate and Environmental budget together with new ring-fenced budgets for the Wildspace Garden and Warm Meal Initiative.

**Decision:** Clerk to action prior to the year end

**24/234. Budget Analysis Report 01.02.24 – 29.02.24:** Noted.

**24/235. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statements 01.02.24 – 29.02.24:** Noted

**24/236. Chair's Announcements:**

Sue Clarke gave an update regarding Inga Page, the Town Council's Admin Assistant who is currently on sick leave.

Both the Chair and Cllr Phillips attended the recent Devon Association of Local Councils conference which was well attended. Members of Teignbridge District Council (TDC) are keen to improve their working relationship with Town and Parish Councils and it was acknowledged that communication is poor and one-way. TDC inform local councils as to what they are doing but do not always listen or ask what is needed in the first place.

Transport and affordable housing were the main topics of discussion.

**24/237. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:**

Cllr Bailey advised that the social supermarket that runs every Tuesday in the Football Club

continues to be very popular.

Cllr Georghiades raised his concerns about the proposed new Plymouth and South Devon Freeport partnership and how this will affect the surrounding rural communities including Dartmoor National Park, part of which is included within its boundary. This may have a significant detrimental impact regarding planning permission, but there has been little information in the public domain.

**24/238. Summary of Key Messages:**

Clerk to action.

Meeting closed at 9.20 pm.