

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 24th January 2023 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors Sue Clarke (Chair), John Bailey, Paul Georghiades, Ron Fox, Sylvee Phillips, Leigh Walker-Haworth, and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

In attendance: Cllrs Stuart Rogers and John Nutley (Teignbridge District Council) and Steven Burch. 6 members of the public

Press: None

24/186. Appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair following the death of Councillor Huw Cox:

The Clerk invited nominations for the position of Chair and Mayor of the Town Council.

Cllr Georghiades nominated Cllr Clarke, Cllr Phillips seconded this nomination. With no further nominations all voted in favour and Cllr Clarke accepted.

Cllr Clarke invited nominations for the position of Deputy Chair and Mayor.

Cllr Phillips nominated Cllr Georghiades which was seconded by Cllr Walker-Haworth with all voted in favour. Cllr Georghiades accepted.

24/187. Apologies for absence: Jim Hughes (new co-opted councillor)

24/188. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

24/189. Newly co-opted Town Councillor welcome: Apologies noted. Jim Hughes to sign his Declaration to Hold Office at either the next meeting or separately with the Clerk.

24/190. To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 20th December 2023 and review actions from these meetings:

Minutes signed by Cllr Clarke.

- Cllr Clarke met with Cllr Rogers to discuss the warm meals initiative. Further details as to how this can be facilitated in Buckfastleigh to be discussed.
- The local PCSO and new Neighbourhood Officer to attend the February Town Council meeting.
- The Mayor's Good Causes Fund will go to the Foodbank. The Clerk confirmed that this has been paid.

24/191. Questions and comments from the public:

Dedication to Huw Cox:

Cllr Nutley led a minute's silence. He will give his own tribute at the funeral.

Cllr Rogers: He met Huw in 2015 when he was doing stonemasonry work. The affordable homes development at Sherborne are to be renamed in his honour.

The Town Council will put a plaque on the new Fore Street bench outside Searles subject to approval from Huw's widow.

Cllr Clarke: Although our politics and opinions were not always aligned Huw put the community of Buckfastleigh and his family first and was highly respected. His loss is a shock to us all.

Cllr Fox: Huw was a stalwart of the community.

Cllr Walker-Haworth: Huw was a good friend to me and my family.

David Harbott: Huw welcomed new people to the town and encouraged them to be part of the community including myself. He was a realist.

Cllr Georghiades: I will always associate Huw with peace and patience.

24/192. 'Explore Buckfastleigh' – a community-led web app presentation by Barbara Greenway and Ruth Chadwick of The Wool Hub CIC:

The initiative is to bring back skills lost in the town. This will be a collaboration with Winchester University to open up buildings to the public using virtual reality, to see what buildings were used for in times gone by for example the houses and mills in the town used in the wool making process during different time periods, day, night, seasons etc. The app would also refer to major characters such as the Hamlyns using audio, bringing history to life. If successful, this may open other stories connected to Buckfastleigh such as Sherlock Holmes. Barbara and Ruth are waiting to see if the university students will pursue this project.

Cllr Georghiades asked what resources are needed?

They will use the Valiant Soldier archive. It should generate sufficient interest from the community. Malmesbury is already doing this, and it has generated a lot of support.

Cllr Walker-Haworth: This is effectively an arts trail and is a good idea for local businesses. He would like to be involved.

Member of the public – this is a fantastic idea.

Cllr Clarke: We need a working party, and we should make more of the town's history. This would be a social and spoken history of our wool town.

24/193. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Nutley: The Teignbridge District Council (TDC) budget discussion is currently the main topic of debate. Car parking fees is their main source of revenue.

Cllr Georghiades asked about the tennis courts. What is the arrangement for the future and is there a business plan?

Cllr Clarke: It has been locked since it was finished.

Action: Cllr Nutley to send information to the Clerk.

Cllr Rogers referred to the TDC prosperity fund and the warm meal initiative.

Action: Cllr Clarke will discuss this with the other councillors and respond to Cllr Rogers.

24/194. To review the Police Report for December 2023:

Recorded offences are increasing. Cllr Fox suggested that it would be helpful for a note of dates to see when incidents occur.

Cllr Bailey: Officers have a vast area to cover so it is difficult to monitor all activity.

Cllr Clarke would like to know about the level of youth crime in the town.

Cllr Walker-Haworth would like ages and numbers to have a more accurate picture.

24/195. Review of Interim Audit Report 2023/24:

Another satisfactory report. The Clerk was thanked for her continued diligence with the accounts.

24/196. Appointment of new bank signatory:

Cllr Walker-Haworth to be the 4th signatory to the Town Council bank account. Clerk to action.

24/197. Budget Analysis Report 01.12.23 – 31.12.23: Noted.

24/198. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statements 01.12.23 – 31.12.23: Noted

24/199. Multi-Pay Card Statements October to December 2023: Noted

24/200. Quarterly Bank Reconciliation October 2023 to December 2023: Noted and signed by the Chair.

24/201. Chair's Announcements:

Cllr Rogers met with Cllr Clarke regarding £2,500 of food vouchers to be shared among the parishes in his ward. They are for a warm meal for £5 from a local food provider but acknowledged that there is a stigma attached to vouchers and these will need to be topped up by £2.50. It was not sure if this is per person or per family and cannot be means tested.

Cllr Bailey suggested to offer a delivered meal at Easter, like the Christmas meal.

A member of the public highlighted that the Christmas meal did not always target those on low incomes.

The aim of the Christmas meal is to reach those on their own or who may wish to join their neighbours. It is mostly used by elderly residents and the Town Council cannot means test people.

There was a suggestion to go through the Foodbank to target those in food poverty, but more money would be needed for this and many families in need do not come forward for help.

Decision: To deliver a free Easter meal.

Cllr Clarke: The Town Hall committee met and agreed to rename Room 3 which has recently been refurbished, the 'Huw Cox Room', subject to the approval of Huw's widow. There will also be a memorial plaque at the Orchard Millennium Green.

24/202. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Phillips asked if there is any update regarding the proposed Timbers Road development and promoted the Burns Night event at the Valiant Soldier on Thursday 25th January.

The Clerk confirmed that she has spoken with the planning officer and the Timbers Road planning application has now gone to appeal with the Planning Inspector following the developer's allegation that the planning authority has not dealt with this application in a timely manner. It is unlikely that there will be any further developments until at least the end of February.

Cllr Georghiades – The town’s Christmas lights display needs to be renewed. Currently we are at the research stage as to how this can move forward and how much it could cost.

Cllr Walker-Haworth asked about the planning application for the Whitecleave Quarry site for sea vessel training.

Clerk: No further news.

Cllr Bailey – The football club is experiencing lower trade and increasing energy costs. Graffiti and dog mess in and around the playing field continue to be a problem.

The Clerk read out a thank you letter to the Council from the Christmas Fair committee following funding for the carousel, insurance, and event support management.

Members acknowledged that the pricing structure for the new tennis courts is not affordable for young people.

A member of the public asked that the new Biodiversity Duty for town and parish councils is discussed at the next meeting. This request was agreed by the Chair.

24/203. Summary of Key Messages:

Clerk to action

24/204. Motion to move into a Part II (private) session to discuss one item of confidential business in accordance with Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Meeting returned to Part I and closed at 9.05 pm.