

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 17th July 2024 at 7.00pm.

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

In attendance: Cllrs Jack Major and Stuart Rogers (Teignbridge District Council) and 4 members of the public

Press: None

24/74. Apologies for absence: Cllrs Sylvee Phillips and John Nutley (Teignbridge District Council)

24/75. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

24/76. To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 19th June 2024 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes approved as correct and signed by the Chair.

No actions to report.

24/77. To receive and note the minutes of the Tourism, Recreation and Economic Development Committee held on 27th June 2024:

Noted.

24/78. Questions and comments from the public:

Sophie Lovett from Moorland Imagination Collective (MIC) provided an update. In 2 to 2½ years they have raised £380,000 of funding and have just started paying salaries. They employ freelancers and have a team of volunteers with mutually beneficial agreements. Numerous projects are underway with various organisations in the town and their work is community focused. The CIC structure sits between a business model and a charity.

Sophie expressed concern regarding alleged misinformation about the café which exists to support the hub but also provide a source of revenue for the ongoing refurbishment. The hub and café will shortly be open 4 days a week.

Cllr Clarke: When councillors reviewed the planning application in a Town Council meeting comments included the impact of the café on existing businesses in Fore Street. A further conversation between councillors which was not in the public domain was again regarding the impact of café when it became apparent that their staff are volunteers. The businesses in Fore Street have paid staff so they cannot compete with this model.

The Town Council has always supported the MIC but have a right to express concern about its impact on local businesses.

Sophie confirmed that the hub is not a volunteer only model, but they have set lower prices to meet need. Other cafes charge higher prices because of higher staff costs.

Cllr Bailey arrived at 7.25 pm. Cllr Fox arrived at 7.37 pm.

Cllr Burch: My understanding, according to the planning application, is that the café should not be a primary function, but just support the function of the hub. This needs clarification. Permission was granted for a community hub with a café as ancillary use.

Sophie reiterated the above.

A member of the public requested an update regarding the Christmas lights which was provided by the Clerk.

Cllrs Rogers: He will be asking about rural transport service provision and is awaiting a response about the transfer of some assets to the Town Council.

24/79. To consider a Larger Grant Application:

The Wool Hub CIC: They have received funding that enabled them to take on the lease of their shop but now have a funding gap for workshops and drop-in sessions. This application to the Town Council is for £2,000 to subsidise these activities. They have applied to the National Lottery and are developing a reasonable income stream, but it is not enough. Summer workshops offer 20-50% reduction on fees for those on lower incomes. The Hub is also a meeting place where there is a welcome and a listening ear. There will be 10 places for a 4-day summer camp for children.

This initiative is enabling people to engage in activities who may not participate in what is already offered in the town. It is providing an experience in the High Street.

The Hub is now registered as a CIC so they can apply for more funding, but they need £7,000 per quarter to survive and only can only meet £3,000 of this from day-to-day revenue.

Decision: £2,000 proposed by Cllr Clarke, seconded by Cllr Bailey – resolved unanimously.

24/80. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

The Clerk summarised Cllr Sarah Parker Khan's Devon County Council report highlighting the repair of potholes, a new bus service strategy, revised bus services and community transport.

Cllr Rogers referred to the Rural Connectivity Fund with Teignbridge District Council (TDC) and Dartmoor National Park (DNP) looking at a new project to provide a round robin bus service to rural communities.

Cllr Rogers to report back re implementing what was discussed between Phil Shears and Sue Clarke following Phil Shears recent visit to Buckfastleigh.

A free bus service hosted by Woods coaches will be available to transport residents to the cost-of-living event on Wednesday 20th November in Ashburton.

There have been some issues with refuse collections in recent weeks.

Cllr Georghiades arrived at 8.05 pm.

There is a noticeable increase in fly-tipping throughout the Teignbridge area. This can be reported directly to TDC or by downloading the app 'What3Words' to identify the area and send to District Councillors to report.

Rural provision is now an item on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda.

Broadband connectivity issues can be reported to Devon County Council.

Cllr Major: The latest round of the Prosperity Fund is now available to apply to.

The Road Warden scheme has been expanded. Cllr Major to send the link to the Clerk.

Cllr Clarke raised the implementation of 20mph zones and why only a small number of communities had been accepted.

24/81. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest: None

24/82. To review the Police Report for June 2024: Noted

24/83. Teignbridge District Council Green Spaces – an update by the Chair:

Cllr Clarke attended a site meeting with the TDC Green Spaces Officer at the Hamlyn;s Park/Duckspond playing field. She highlighted that the very popular Buckfastleigh Scouts group have 90 scouts with a waiting list but are spending much of their funds on hiring venues. They need storage and a permanent venue. Cllr Clarke asked about the provision of a scout hut.

The Town Council is not permitted to provide premises where the scouts would be the sole tenant as it must be available for other uses. Who could be the landlord? Can the Football Club take on the lease if supplied by TDC?

Cllr Bailey: This whole area needs to be reviewed. The Football Club could do this and offer facilities such as toilets. Unfortunately, the tennis courts are now out of the equation and what is the scheme for tennis coaching? Have TDC discussed who uses the tennis courts and can concessions be offered such as free passes for Camphill, the Bungalow etc?

Whatever structure is suggested for the scouts, it will need utilities such as WCs and water to be connected.

24/84. Budget Analysis Report 01.06.24 – 30.06.24: Noted.

24/85. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.06.24 – 30.06.24: Noted

24/86. Multi-Pay Card Statements April 2024 to June 2024: Noted

24/87. Quarterly Bank Reconciliation April 2024 to June 2024: Noted

24/88. Annual Review of Town Council Standing Orders:

No new revisions have been identified by the Clerk.

Decision: Adopted

24/89. To discuss the frequency and remit of the Town Council's Finance Committee:

Decision: Cllrs to ensure that they have read documents prior to each meeting. Clerk to highlight important issues to note or discuss. Members agreed to ensure regular overview and scrutiny but continue with the current system.

24/90. Chair's Announcements:

Cllr Clarke reported that she attended the AGM of the Ashburton and Buckfastleigh League of

Friends as the Vice Chair. The charity is aligned to health and welfare in both communities. There is £200,000 in the accounts and no funds have been awarded in grants in recent years since they funded the COVID taxi. Cllr Clarke to join the Finance meeting of the League of Friends.

A letter to TDC regarding the Town Council's disappointment regarding the criteria for the Rural England Prosperity Fund has been sent. At the time of writing this was restricted to a new market initiative which was not feasible for Buckfastleigh and the request for funding towards the new Christmas lights was rejected as not meeting the criteria of increasing footfall to the town centre.

The Town Hall hosted a wedding reception at the weekend which was very successful.

An outdoor councillor's surgery will be held on Saturday 20th July with emphasis on listening to resident's concerns and councillor recruitment.

24/91. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Georghiades has visited various businesses in Dart Mills regarding donations for the Christmas lights.

24/92. Items requiring Urgent Attention: None

24/93. Summary of Key Messages: Clerk to action.

24/94. Motion to move into a Part II (private) session to receive quotes for the installation of new town centre Christmas lights including upgraded infrastructure and to discuss two items of confidential business in accordance with Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The second quote for the new Christmas lights display in Fore Street was not received until 3 hours before this meeting which did not give Members adequate time to consider. The Chair agreed to call an Extraordinary Town Council Part II meeting called for Wednesday 24th July at 7.00pm to consider quotes.

Clerk to review the update of the Town Guide further and the provision of a new website was deferred to later in the year due to the current volume of work.

Meeting closed at 9.18pm