

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 21st August 2024 at 7.00pm.

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

In attendance: Cllr John Nutley (Teignbridge District Council), Pam Barrett on behalf of Be Buckfastleigh and 5 members of the public

Press: None

24/95. Apologies for absence: Cllrs Stuart Rogers and Jack Major (Teignbridge District Council)

24/96. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

24/97 To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 17th July 2024 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes approved as correct and signed by the Chair.

No actions to report.

24/98. To approve and sign the minutes of the Extraordinary Town Council Meeting held on 24th July 2024 and resolve the acceptance of Quote A to supply and install a new town centre Christmas Lights display and associated infrastructure.

Councillor Georghiades proposed Quote A at a cost of £17,596 (exc VAT) which includes upgraded infrastructure for Year 1 and a further cost of £15,323 in Years 2 and 3. Eye bolt testing and the first switch-on to be an additional expense.

Resolution: All Members voted unanimously in favour of the above.

Cllrs Burch and Georghiades to meet to review how contributions are sought from the community. It was also agreed to appoint one councillor to oversee social media posts. To discuss further.

Member of the public asked re the future use of the 12 days of Christmas boards which had previously been part of the Fore Street Christmas lights display.

The Clerk explained that all previous lights and equipment does not belong to the Town Council, is no longer fit for purpose and would not be used by the professional lighting company. As a local authority the Council must adhere to strict regulations concerning Christmas lights to ensure public safety, risk and public liability which is why there are additional costs in the first year to upgrade existing infrastructure.

Member of the public: The Moor Imagination Collective at the Methodist Church may be interested in displaying the Christmas boards.

24/99. Questions and comments from the public:

Question from member of the public about increased fly tipping and the reinstatement of the bulky waste service which used to be in Woodholme car park.

Cllr Nutley explained that this service was withdrawn due to increasing costs.

Member of public: The cost of providing this popular service must outweigh the cost of Teignbridge District Council (TDC) having to clear the amount of builders' waste, white goods, furniture etc that is abandoned every year?

Cllr Clarke: The Town Council had sought permission for a new Tetrapak recycling skip from TDC but the District Council is reluctant to allow the Town Council to use their car park and requested payment.

Member of public: The new Dart Valley Totnes to Buckfastleigh cycle route is now open providing a safe walking and cycling path away from traffic.

Clerk: The Town Council has offered to facilitate and pay the cost of room hire in the Town Hall for the Cycle South Dartmoor to hold a consultation for a dedicated safe cycle path from Ashburton to Buckfastleigh and South Brent.

It is acknowledged that this initiative would be of particular benefit to students attending South Dartmoor Community College and residents may be interested in learning about and supporting the campaign.

Pam Barrett: The devastation of bat population in Buckfastleigh. A recent bat count only noted 20 bats which is worryingly low for the town. Many agencies manage the bats but do not really have a coordinated approach. A licence has been sought to adapt the roost due to increasing predation by Barn owls and other animals. There needs to be engagement with the Barn Owl Trust to establish why this is happening. Some bats have moved deeper into the caves or dispersed further afield to avoid these predators, but how and what are the bats getting out to hunt and eat? A multi-agency approach is needed which includes South Hams to discuss ways to protect the bats and provide safer routes for them to hunt.

The Chair moved to Agenda item no.13, Minute no. 24/108:

24/108. To discuss the future of the Be Buckfastleigh Hello Summer Programme of activities for young people:

Pam Barrett as Director of Be Buckfastleigh gave an update and history of the Hello Summer programme. This service for young people came about as one of the top priorities from public consultation and was funded by Town Council and Children in Need money for 3 years.

Be Buckfastleigh continued to deliver on behalf of the Town Council, but this funding only met the cost of delivery of activities, not staff and programming costs. Devon County Council Holidays Activities and Food Programme (HAF) money was only for Buckfastleigh and was cut from 70 children to 30 for food and holiday activities. There are also 75 children in Bridgetown and 50 in Bovey Tracey. Funding also has been sought from a variety of other organisations.

HAF criteria includes the collection of data from parents, but funds do not cover planning, evaluation and safeguarding costs and HAF permits children from anywhere in Devon to attend activities including Buckfastleigh. 900 children are recorded as attending during the summer although many will engage in more than one activity. Be Buckfastleigh receives very positive feedback.

Cllr Georghiades asked what has changed to lead to the closing of The Living Room premises on Fore Street?

Pam Barrett: They had core funding for the last 3 years which covered staff costs which allowed capacity to bring in other funds. The programme is now finished so core costs are no longer

covered for staff, lease of premises etc.

Over time staff have undertaken invaluable work with families building skills and confidence. The staff will be made redundant at the end of September and the Living Room closed but the organisation will continue to exist but without the funding needed to continue the service previously provided. Play scheme provision is currently under review by central government so it is hoped that funding will become available so they can continue. The data collected supports funding bids.

Be Buckfastleigh also runs the early years group, Little Lambs but funding for this has also gone.

Priorities for the organisation are the continuation of Little Lambs, the Social Supermarket and Hello Summer programme.

Su Maddock, Chair of Be Buckfastleigh: They are open to any family who wants to use the service. Time and relationship building is never costed. The organisation helps address inequalities defined by who receives a free school meal. Many children however are not eligible because they do not meet the criteria and yet are still in need which is very difficult to manage.

The Living Room will be missed as a community-based organisation. Public services do not always reach those who need it most.

Pam Barrett: Rural communities are not accessing the money that is available via the District Councils. There is no strategic focus at County and District level. Be Buckfastleigh was bringing in approximately £300,000 in grants which paid for the staff. One member of staff has built significant relationships with local families, and these may be lost.

The weekly Social Supermarket at the Football Club is run by volunteers and is currently secure due to the number of clients who make a small financial contribution each time they use the service. Much of the food is sourced from local businesses.

Cllr Bailey: How many children does the Town Council contribution support?

Pam Barrett: All of the £10,500 allocated by the Town Council is used to deliver 900 places in Buckfastleigh.

HAF funding includes the criteria that children must be fed as part of the activity and that this only applies to children of primary school age. It is not known if HAF will still pay for food.

Pam offered to have another discussion with the Council once there is more clarity about future funding.

24/100. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Nutley: Chrissie Drew the TDC Green Spaces Project Officer has had a conversation and site visit with Cllr Clarke regarding a new Scouts building and lease of land for this to the Football Club. TDC has increased the cost to the tenant but he is aware that the Scout Association will support this.

Cllr Bailey – TDC are doubling the rent for the Football Club. He asked Cllr Nutley to consult with TDC the area identified at Duckspound playing field and how this can be incorporated in the lease to facilitate a new scouts hut.

Cllr Nutley: Torbay Hospital is currently looking for new governors as public member

representatives.

24/101. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest: None.

Cllr Bailey: The proposed development at the Timbers Road site although within the Dean Prior parish and in South Hams, will not benefit from any Section 106 money. The Town Council will need to consider what this could be used for e.g. a new playpark if the planning application is approved.

24/102. To review the Police Report for June 2024: Noted

PC Claire Hurrell has given a talk on road safety to Year 12 pupils at South Dartmoor Community College along with other emergency services following a spate of crashes that involved young drivers and cyclists in Devon.

Action: Clerk to send a letter of thanks re this to PC Hurrell.

24/103. To discuss the Town Council bid for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund:

The Clerk explained that it has been challenging to collate all the information needed for the bid in such a relatively short period of time, but if successful The Buckfastleigh Gateway project would hopefully be the start of improving the image of the town leading to an increase in footfall and continued interest from businesses.

24/104. To receive the Teignbridge Citizens Advice Buckfastleigh Outreach Activity Report April to June 2024: Noted

24/105. To appoint a new bank signatory:

Following the resignation of Cllr Walker-Haworth, Members agreed to appoint Cllr Bailey as a new signatory to the Town Council bank account.

Action: Clerk to make the necessary arrangements.

24/106. Budget Analysis Report 01.07.24 – 31.07.24: Noted

The Clerk commented that there is currently a low number of applications for the smaller grants fund.

Action: To publicise in the October community news sheet.

24/107. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.07.24 – 31.07.24: Noted

24/109. Chair's Announcements:

It has been agreed that the Town Council will support the new Housing Need Survey by publicising on Facebook, the website and distributing posters. Cllrs Clarke, Georghades and De Groot-Marzec will also attend the Social Supermarket and Food Bank as advertised to help and encourage residents to complete and return the questionnaire. It should be emphasised that responses are anonymous and that the survey is to establish need and collate data to support future housing developments. There is no underlying motive to ask tenants to downsize.

The number of Town Councillor vacancies continues to be of concern and there needs to be a new

approach to attracting candidates.

24/110. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Bailey praised the efforts of the weekly Social Supermarket at the Football Club.

24/111. Items requiring Urgent Attention: None

24/112. Summary of Key Messages: Clerk to action.

Meeting closed at 9.20 pm.