

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 19th June 2024 at 7.40pm.

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

In attendance: Cllrs Jack Major, John Nutley, Paul Parker, and Stuart Rogers (Teignbridge District Council) and 3 members of the public regarding the smaller grant applications

Press: None

24/55. Apologies for absence: Cllrs Leigh Walker-Haworth and Paul Georghiadis

Newly elected Teignbridge Councillor Jack Major was welcomed to the meeting by the Chair.

24/56. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

24/57. To approve and sign the minutes of the Annual Town Council Meeting and Town Council Meeting held on 22nd May 2024 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes approved and signed by the Chair.

No actions to report.

24/58. Questions and comments from the public:

24/59. To consider Smaller Grants Applications:

History Society Buckfastleigh – 2 members present. A new group which meets at The Valiant Soldier but needs to extend its remit to provide an interesting and varied range of talks and trips in relation to Buckfastleigh and beyond. The group is fundraising and there is no annual membership fee to make it more accessible to all. Funding however is needed to pay guest speakers, room hire and develop an archive.

Decision: Proposed £250 – resolved unanimously

Buckfastleigh Action for Nature Group (BANG) – BANG Chair, Malcolm Scoble in attendance. The group has been running for 3 years and have successfully applied to other organisations for specific projects. The aim of the group is to improve the biodiversity of green spaces around the parish such as the work undertaken at Holy Trinity churchyard and engage with residents. In 2023 they opened the wild gardens in Buckfastleigh to the public which was very successful. They would like to develop their website and communications and are planning a bookable walk.

Malcolm was asked when does re-wilding become overgrown?

The group looks after some verges in the parish where there can be conflict with road users, but a strip around the edge is cut to ensure footpaths and visual splays are not obstructed. Cultivated gardens can still have managed wild areas.

Decision: Proposed £500 – resolved unanimously

The Friendship Group – it was agreed that representatives are not expected to attend this meeting due to their age, mobility and health issues.

This group holds a weekly meeting in the Town Hall which has run for many years. Grant funding gives people, many of whom live on their own, the opportunity to participate in days out and social occasions.

Decision: Proposed £500 – resolved unanimously

24/60. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Nutley explained that Teignbridge District Council has received funding from Sport England to support swimming pools in the area. £2,500 from the first phase of funding has been awarded to the Buckfastleigh pool. TDC also has job vacancies in sport and leisure.

The council has been planting 1,000 trees annually, but this project is due to end in March 2025 as they are running out of land and funds.

TDC have a new and improved fleet of refuse and street cleaning vehicles which have lower emissions, better vision for the drivers, electrical lifting gear for the bins and reduced noise levels for the operatives.

Cllr Rogers is looking at improving rural transport connections for example a bus service for the rural communities to access the beaches at Teignmouth and Dawlish. Cllrs Rogers and Parker are working with TDC and Dartmoor National Park on submitting a bid for a rural transport connectivity grant although this has been delayed for the forthcoming election.

Cllr Clarke raised concern about the access and criteria to the Rural Prosperity Fund and that Buckfastleigh had only been given the opportunity to apply for funding for a feasibility study regarding a new town centre market initiative which had not been discussed and without a Chamber of Trade would have been difficult to achieve. A request for money towards the new Christmas lights was rejected and yet the criteria states funding is available to help increase footfall.

The Chair also asked how TDC communicates and consults with residents and that this had been raised at the recent forum meeting she attended with Cllr Phillips and town walkabout with Phil Shears the Managing Director of Teignbridge. She also queried the availability of a new arts budget and how would this be distributed?

Cllr Clarke will be meeting Chrissie Drew, the TDC Green Spaces Project Officer to discuss free coaching sessions at the new tennis courts and how it is accessed by residents.

Cllr Major reported that the Teignbridge CVS (Council for Voluntary Services) will be running a 2024 awards ceremony for volunteers who have been nominated for their community service. Cost of living payments have now been issued following receipt of applications, but there is also a Household Support Fund which can supply short term financial support to those who are struggling. Criteria and how to apply is available on the TDC website and there is new dedicated officer on the switchboard to provide advice.

Cllr Rogers advised that there will be a new Green Grant Fund available after the election, more information to follow.

Following the recent funeral home scandal in Hull the Government has initiated nationwide

inspections and audits of all funeral care facilities by council officers to improve health and safety and operational procedures.

A cost-of-living event will be held in Ashburton on 20th November 2024. Cllr Rogers is looking at providing transport for Buckfastleigh residents so that they can attend. He confirmed that he is committed to finding what services Buckfastleigh does receive from TDC.

Cllr Bailey asked about the availability of public transport for education and work.

This should be looked at by Devon County Council as provision for Buckfastleigh is very poor.

Dartmoor National Park has been invited to answer questions at the TDC Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

24/61. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest: None

24/62. To review the Police Report for May 2024:

Cllr De Groot-Marzec raised concern about the increasing level of vandalism at the South Devon Railway and whether the statistics provided in the report could indicate how many under 18s are committing offences in the town.

The Chair explained that there are restorative procedures in place to deal with young people and it is important to contact the police whenever a crime is witnessed.

24/63. To comment on the Teignbridge District Council Consultation on Planning Application Validation Guides:

Members noted the consultation and commented that the document process and wording is overly complication and not user friendly to new applicants.

24/64. To review the draft Buckfastleigh Housing Needs Survey and Covering Letter:

Councillors were supportive of the content of the questionnaire and covering letter but agreed that due to the complexity of the situation in Buckfastleigh this process should not be rushed and must not clash with the school summer holidays. Adequate time for consultation with residents is needed and the Town Council would like to support this for e.g. helping residents complete the survey in the library.

It should be stressed that the questionnaire is not solely aimed at the householder and is relevant to all of those who have a housing need, for e.g. a young adult or couple living with parents.

Text should clearly highlight that the survey is anonymous and that individuals cannot be identified for e.g. a social housing resident living on their own may be concerned that by completing the questionnaire they are identified as living in a property where they may be encouraged to downsize.

24/65. To discuss receipt of the new Community Infrastructure Levy payment:

£1,129.87 has been received from TDC which can be used towards funding new infrastructure

such as signage. Members to consider options.

24/66. To receive and note the Annual Internal End of Year Audit Report 2023/24:

Another satisfactory report from the Internal Auditor which was noted with thanks to the Clerk.

24/67. Budget Analysis Report 01.05.24 – 31.05.24: Noted.

24/68. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.05.24 – 31.05.24: Noted

24/69. To discuss the frequency and remit of the Town Council's Finance Committee:

Members agreed that the Chair of Finance should ensure that there is an overview of financial reports and bring forward any matters requiring attention to this meeting, but as Cllr Georghades has given his apologies this item should be deferred to the July meeting.

24/70. Chair's Announcements:

The Chair expressed her disappointment about the lack of information and publicity regarding how to book the new tennis courts. TDC are still reluctant to discuss the green spaces in Buckfastleigh despite repeated requests.

The Town Council had agreed to fund a new Tetra Pak recycling facility in Woodholme car park, but TDC questioned how this could be achieved and requested rent for the space identified even though this area is not used for parking. TDC will now provide this facility but had failed to inform the Town Clerk.

Cllr Clarke had attended the D Day commemorative event at Holy Trinity Church which was very moving.

Members were informed that Little Lambs the early years group that meets weekly at St. Luke's Church is struggling financially. This essential service which regularly has 35 children attending is not only an opportunity for pre-school children to play but have structured activities which supports their development leading up to attending school. A variety of information is provided for parents too.

Parents are encouraged to help with the volunteer rota and a reduced fee will be charged to pay for the room hire.

Action: Cllr Clarke to donate her Mayor's Good Causes fund - £550.00

24/71. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Phillips attended a TDC Town and Parish Council Forum. A copy of the slides will be circulated when available. She also attended the Dartmoor Preservation Association AGM.

Residents are encouraged to use the social supermarket at the Football Club which is open every Tuesday from 3.30 – 5.30pm. For a suggested cash donation of £3.50 10 items which includes fresh and healthy produce can be purchased.

24/72. Items requiring Urgent Attention: None

24/73. Summary of Key Messages: Clerk to action.

Meeting closed at 9.00pm