

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

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

Present: Councillors: Paul Georghiadis (Deputy Chair), John Bailey, Joanna De Groot-Marzec, Sylvee Phillips, and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

In attendance: Mary Ridgway, Teignbridge District Council Enabling Officer, Mandy Goddard, Devon Communities Together, Cllr Stuart Rogers (Teignbridge District Council) and 2 members of the public

Press: None

24/05. Apologies for absence: Cllrs Sue Clarke, Steven Burch, Ron Fox, and Leigh Walker-Haworth. Cllr John Nutley (Teignbridge District Council)

24/06. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

24/07. To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 20th March 2024 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes approved and signed by the Deputy Chair.

No actions to report.

24/08. Representation by Mary Ridgway, Teignbridge District Council Housing Enabling Officer, and Mandy Goddard, Devon Communities Together re a new Housing Needs Survey for the parish of Buckfastleigh:

There is an overwhelming need for affordable housing. Teignbridge District Council (TDC) work with Devon Communities Together (DCT) on several issues but in particular Housing Need Surveys (HNS). It is important to know what type of housing and tenure communities need for e.g. social rented, shared housing etc, a HNS provides a snapshot that can help with housing provision.

There are currently 37 households registered with Devon Home Choice (DHC) for Buckfastleigh which remains a consistent need as very few vacancies become available.

The cost of a HNS is often met from developers and as Buckfastleigh lies mostly within Dartmoor National Park (DNP) housing site allocation and need comes under their Local Plan. The DNP methodology statement sets certain standards which includes DHC statistics.

On this occasion LiveWest who are a social housing provider has come forward with a proposal for 100% affordable housing for an exception site. TDC have stipulated that LiveWest should undertake the HNS which must meet strict criteria. There is a need for social rented housing in Buckfastleigh as some households are living in privately rented accommodation and are not aware of the different types of tenure which may be available to them.

TDC facilitates the HNS on behalf of the developer, but it is owned by DCT who have the copyright. The HNS will give an indication of how much of the housing stock in Buckfastleigh is used for holiday rentals such as Bed and Breakfasts and Airbnbs and is therefore unavailable. The HNS includes specific questions regarding need, eligibility, local connection, household income etc. There is also a section for older people regarding whether they wish to downsize

and/or have issues with mobility and accessibility.

TDC acknowledge that there have been some communication issues with the parishes within their area and wish to work with Town and Parish councils. They are looking for support from Buckfastleigh Town Council to promote the HNS. It has been agreed with LiveWest that TDC has the right to share the data collected with both the Town Council and neighbouring parishes for eg. Dean Prior regarding the Timbers Road site. Each parish is different and has its own specific needs. A roadshow/drop-in session will be organised for Buckfastleigh and grants are available for community led projects for the delivery of affordable housing via a Community Land Trust.

Cllr De Groot-Marzec: Surveys do not reach everyone for e.g. people living in camper vans who may need and want housing.

Mandy explained that they are aware that this happens, so it is important for the Town Council to encourage residents to complete the HNS.

Cllr Phillips: Surveys can raise expectations but with little or no visible outcome so some may choose not to complete the HNS.

Mary: It is not a perfect process, but it is a starting point. For e.g. the affordable housing quota proposed for the Timbers Road site is poor and the data used by the developer to qualify their assessment of need is out of date (2014) which is why it is important to have a new HNS which will provide evidence and an argument to determine what is needed.

It was noted that neighbouring parish councils have held their own drop-in sessions in publicly accessible venues where residents can not only seek further information but ask for assistance in completing their questionnaire.

Cllr Bailey: HNS are needed to support new planning applications for affordable housing. If people do not demonstrate need by not completing the survey, there will not be any new housing within the parish.

Decision: Members agreed to support a new HNS but do not wish to have multiple surveys which can create user fatigue. The Clerk to liaise with Mary and Mandy.

24/09. Questions and comments from the public: None

24/10. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Rogers apologised regarding his recent lack of attendance, but this has been due to the ATM vandalism at Ashburton Post Office.

Cllr Rogers highlighted the increasing incidents of scammers targeting rural areas and to encourage residents to be aware of fraudulent communications even if it is a local number.

There has been a significant increase in fly tipping where offenders are dumping rubbish in isolated areas and blocking farm gates. Cllr Rogers asked Members to report any incidents of fly tipping to himself or Cllr Nutley. He is re-visiting the need for the rural skip service to be reinstated.

It is acknowledged that there is a lack of connectivity regarding the availability and frequency

of buses servicing this area and he is looking at the viability of providing a community bus.

24/11. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:

It was noted that there have been objections and observations from Heritage England and the DNP Conservation Officer regarding the proposed work to the Methodist Church, Chapel Street application to convert to a community hub. The building is Grade II listed and therefore subject to many restrictions. Applicants should be encouraged to discuss their applications with the Town Council.

The Town Council continues to support this project and would like to see it succeed. We are aware that 100 volunteers have already offered to help with the variety of work needed, but in addition to this the building will require specific skill sets and a significant amount of funding.

24/12. To review the Police Report for March 2024: Noted

24/13. To note The Valiant Soldier grant award correspondence pending the second part of this payment as agreed at the Town Council meeting held on 22nd November 2023:

Photographs of work in progress and the completed room at The Valiant Soldier Museum had been circulated to councillors together with a letter of thanks. The room was suffering badly from damp both to the floor and walls and required substantial work. It can now be used as a warm, comfortable, and multi-functional space.

Decision: The second and final instalment of the Larger Grant award (total £5,000) was agreed by all Members present. Clerk to action.

24/14. Budget Analysis Report 01.03.24 – 31.03.24: Noted.

24/15. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statements 01.03.24 – 31.03.24: Noted

24/16. Multi-Pay Card Statements January 2024 to March 2024: Noted

24/17. Quarterly Bank Reconciliation January 2024 to March 2024: Noted

24/18. Chair's Announcements:

Cllr De Groot-Marzec reported on behalf of the Chair that they had attended the Buckfastleigh Residents' Association AGM. It was noted that no new members are joining and that they need to find another charitable organisation to take over the running and maintenance of the Barn Park play park. Both TDC and Teign Housing have been approached to this effect but neither organisation wish to take on this asset.

24/19. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Bailey advised members that DNP have recommended to the Planning Inspector that funds from the s106 agreement for the proposed Timbers Road development should be given to Buckfastleigh even though the site lies both within the parish of Dean Prior and district of South Hams. Dean Prior Parish Council will challenge this.

24/20. Summary of Key Messages:

Clerk to action.

Meeting closed at 8.35 pm