

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 22nd May 2024 at 7.40pm.

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

In attendance: Phillip Arkwright, Chief Executive Officer, Buckfast Abbey, Cllr Stuart Rogers (Teignbridge District Council) and 2 members of the public

Press: None

24/34. Apologies for absence: Cllrs Leigh Walker-Haworth. Cllrs John Nutley and Jack Major (Teignbridge District Council)

24/35. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

24/36. To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 17th April 2024 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes approved and signed by the Deputy Chair.

No actions to report.

24/37. To receive and note the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 24th April 2024:

Noted.

24/38. Questions and comments from the public:

A member of the public, Mark Jefferys asked about a new edition of the Town Guide. The Clerk explained that the services of the publisher previously used is unlikely to be available for a new publication and this is a huge task which takes many months to research and collate. At present the Town Council does not have the capacity or resources to undertake this.

Action: To discuss further at the next Tourism, Recreation and Community Development meeting. Mark to be invited to this meeting.

The Chair moved the agenda to Item No. 6

24/39. Buckfast Village Hall update:

Philip Arkwright explained that he had met with the Buckfast Village Hall committee members who have asked Buckfast Abbey to take over the running and maintenance of the hall.

The Care Village planning application, which was submitted in 2019 and approved in 2020, has now stalled as the Section 106 agreement has not been agreed. The planning authority have asked the Abbey to re-submit the application and despite the huge amount of costs already incurred, the development of their site is no further forward.

The Abbey is a Benedictine monastery, and it was hoped that the legacy of the monks under the St. Benedict Care Trust would be to provide a care village for the future. The demolition of the current village hall and provision of a new one was part of phase 1 of the development, but as no permission is in place the original plan has stalled and needs to be reviewed.

The village hall committee would like to hand over at the earliest opportunity, but the Town

Council has the lease. Will the Town Council surrender the lease?

Decision: Members agreed unanimously to surrender the lease subject to written confirmation from Buckfast Abbey that the village hall will continue to be available and affordable for use as a community venue, ensure compliance, governance and undertake all maintenance as required.

24/40. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Rogers advised that Cllrs Nutley and newly elected Cllr Major were attending the Widecombe Parish Council meeting this evening.

Cllr Rogers acknowledges the valuable work undertaken by the Town and Parish Rangers and would like to know their remit to compare to what Teignbridge District Council thinks they may be doing as each parish is different. He is aware that many residents feel that their parishes look neglected with overgrown weeds and that this may be improved by the engagement of the rangers.

The Clerk reiterated that it is not the job of the part-time Town Ranger to sweep, clean and remove weeds from the streets and that this statutory responsibility lies with the District Council. The Ranger does not have Chapter 8 training or the necessary qualifications to deal with roadside waste and this is not part of his job description.

Cllr Rogers is looking at improving transport connections between the rural areas and the towns and is working with Devon County Council on this initiative for eg. some students have to use 3 buses to travel to South Devon College which is unacceptable – more news to follow shortly.

Cllr Rogers is also seeking the reinstatement of the annual rural skip collection to help with increasing fly-tipping the removal of which is expensive.

24/41. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest: None

24/42. To review the Police Report for April 2024: Noted

The Chair stressed the need for residents to attend the monthly police surgeries and expressed concern at recent action which resulted in the arrest of an individual and successful recovery of some very dangerous weapons in the town.

24/43. The Duckspod rewilding update:

The Clerk was pleased to report that following the de-silting of the pond on Duckspod Road it now has more depth to support the wildlife that live there. 10 native fish have recently been introduced to the pond which will help enhance the existing ecosystem and it is hoped if this introduction is successful more fish can be added.

A tree that had fallen into the pond has now been removed and some of the wood has been used to create new habitats around the pond edge.

We would like to extend our thanks to Gary our Town Ranger for the ongoing work to our much-loved pond.

24/44. To receive the Teignbridge Citizens Advice Buckfastleigh Outreach Activity Report January to March 2024 and newsletter:

Noted with thanks to the Citizens Advice service for their continuing work to support residents in the parish.

24/45. Budget Analysis Report 01.04.24 – 30.04.24: Noted.

24/46. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statements 01.04.24 – 30.04.24: Noted

24/47. Following completion of the audit, to receive and note the following:

- **Audited End of Year Accounts and Bank Balances 2023/24:**
- **The Annual Internal End of Year Audit Report 2023/24 and to agree the appointment of the Internal Auditor for 2024/25:**

Appointment of Internal Auditor agreed. Audit report noted. The Clerk was thanked for her work on the end of year audit and accounts and her continued diligence.

24/48. To approve and sign the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24:

Annual Governance Statement recorded and signed by the Chair of the Town Council and Clerk

24/49. To approve and sign the Accounting Statement of the Annual Return 2023/24:

Annual Accounting Statement recorded and signed by the Chair of the Town Council and Clerk.

24/50. To note the Exercise of Public Rights which will commence on 3rd June 2024 and end on 12th July 2024:

Notice of Public rights – dates of publication noted.

Clerk to action the above.

24/51. To note the renewal of the Town Council's insurance policy and to consider increasing the annual premium to include insurance for business cyber security:

Noted

Decision: Members unanimously agreed to add business cyber security cover to the Town Council insurance policy. Clerk to action.

24/52. Chair's Announcements:

Cllr Clarke thanked Cllr Georghiadis for his support as Deputy Chair.

Cllr Clarke would like to note how often District Councillors attend this meeting, how they represent Buckfastleigh and convey this to the public.

Cllr De Groot-Marzec agreed that they should be aware of what is important to the town and their electorate and as a new councillor herself to understand individual roles and responsibilities.

The Chair would like to have more surgeries to enable the Council to listen to the concerns raised by residents.

Cllr Bailey suggested that a short job description could be created for the position of Mayor and Chair and the Deputy role.

Cllr Burch asked for the Council to review how the responsibilities of the Town Council meeting and Finance Committee are divided so that full Council can focus more on key concerns than the day to day running of finances.

Action: Terms of Reference of the Finance Committee to be reviewed at the June Town Council meeting.

24/53. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting: None

24/54. Summary of Key Messages:

Clerk to action.

Meeting closed at 9.35pm