

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 11th September 2024 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: Paul Georghiades (Chair), John Bailey, Steven Burch and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

In attendance: Cllr Sue Clarke

Press: None

24/07. Apologies for absence: Cllr Ron Fox

24/08. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

24/09. To approve and sign the minutes from the Finance Committee held on 24th April 2024:

Minutes signed as correct by Cllr Georghiades.

The Town Clerk announced that the Town Lottery has awarded the Town Council £2,000 towards the new Christmas Lights display which was an unexpected but delightful and generous gesture.

24/10. Initial discussion following receipt of one larger grant application with recommendations to full Council:

The Bungalow Project – Dungeons and Dragons Club: Application for £2,470. Members expressed concerns about how many children subscribe to this activity relative to the cost and amount of funding requested. Is this good value for money?

Decision: To discuss further with the applicant at the September Town Council meeting prior to reaching a decision.

24/11. To receive the current Grants Report for 2024/24: Noted

It was noted that some larger grant expenditure is spent further into the financial year, but to date there has not been significant demand for the smaller grants.

24/12. First review of ring-fenced budgets and make recommendations to full Council for the 2025/26 budget:

The Clerk advised that some ring-fenced budgets are likely to be spent before the end of the current financial year

Decision: Recommendation to full Council to note the current totals and review again alongside the draft budget for 2025/26.

24/13. Initial 2025/26 budget discussion pending the public consultation:

Members agreed that a budget questionnaire sent to residents on this occasion would not be productive due to the Housing Need Survey currently in circulation. The traditional budget evening no longer attracts enough participation, and the Town Council is not able to offer any new services/projects to residents due to limited funding and capacity but would like to continue to fund existing services and have public support for these for eg. the swimming pool and youth services.

Decision: Recommendation to full Council to facilitate more Councillor Surgeries and change the remit of the October Town Council meeting to an extended drop-in session with refreshments from 3.00pm to 8.00pm in the Town Hall. This would give residents the opportunity in a more relaxed environment to ask questions and understand what we can and cannot provide, what their money is spent on and how their concerns and requests are not always met by the larger authorities for eg. Councillors are aware that overgrown vegetation on the streets, pavements and footpaths is a regular complaint.

To take on more services or extend what the Town Council already provides such as the Town Ranger would require more funds and this can only be facilitated by increasing the Council Tax as our main source of revenue.

Action: Cllr Georghiades to draft an invitation to the community for the October news sheet.

24/14. Questions and comments from the public: No public in attendance.

24/15. Items requiring urgent attention: None

Meeting closed at 8.50 pm.