

BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 18th September 2024 at 7.00pm.

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

In attendance: Cllr Jack Major (Teignbridge District Council) and 3 members of the public

Press: None

24/113. Apologies for absence: Cllrs Steven Burch, Ron Fox and Sylvee Phillips, John Nutley and Stuart Rogers (Teignbridge District Council)

24/114. Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

24/115 To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 21st August 2024 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes signed by the Chair with one minor amendment.

No actions to report.

24/116. To receive and note the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 11th September 2024:

To resolve the following recommendations from Minute Nos:

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

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

Initial ring-fenced budget recommendations noted pending further expenditure during the remainder of this financial year.

Members of the Finance Committee had a strategic discussion about the 2025/26 precept. The Town Council wants to continue all the good things we fund but the precept cannot stay still.

Cllr Bailey: As councillors and trustees, we maintain what we have and improve where we can, but we also have obligations for e.g. the Town Hall and grants. We will have to raise the money that is needed.

Cllr Georghiades proposed to hold a drop-in session for residents from 3.00pm to 8.00pm to discuss the budget. The Clerk suggested that this could take place instead of the usual monthly meeting in October – Agreed

The Chair moved the agenda to Item No. 5

24/117. To consider 1 Smaller Grant Application and 1 Larger Grant Application:

The Bungalow Youth Project - Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) application:

Cllr Georghiades explained the Larger Grant budget has limited funds half of which have already been allocated this year.

The applicant was told that this application is for a significant amount of money which will only benefit a very small group of children.

Children who attend the club are in transition from primary to secondary school. Neurodivergent children who play D&D develop their social skills and gain confidence. The applicant has had experience of working with neurodivergent children for the last 10 years. Sessions run from September to September for 2 hours per week, but the applicant would like to extend to 2 sessions per week. Funding currently covers 3 hours per week with 2 hours for play and 1 hour for preparation. The group has a waiting list, and children choose to leave the game when they want to. It is a safe space where children can make decisions in a fun way.

Cllr Georghiades: This is more money than the Town Council feels we can give compared to other services in the town.

Cllr Clarke proposed treating this application as a smaller grant for £500 but this was not the recommendation from the Finance Committee.

Cllr Georghiades: Need more evidence re effectiveness e.g. testimonials from children, parents and teachers.

Cllr Bailey: We need to know more about it so we can understand how it benefits children.

The applicant agreed that £500 would cover a term and a half.

Decision: Cllr Georghiades proposed £500 with all in agreement.

Conversation Works – Memory Café:

The Memory Café is held in a South Devon Railway carriage once a month while it is travelling to Totnes and back. Lottery funding covered setup costs but this has now been spent. There is a steering group which meets every 3 months. A suggested £2.50 donation per person is charged for refreshments, but funding is needed for a new leaflet and to cover the cost of events.

Cllr De Groot-Marzec: The group is important for people suffering with dementia and provides respite for carers and family.

It costs £2,360 to run the group for a year and they are constantly looking at different ways of fundraising, but they must demonstrate development for funding and are looking at setting up a new group in Ivybridge.

Cllr Clarke recently attended the Memory Café anniversary celebration at the South Devon Railway which was lovely.

Decision: Cllr Georghiades proposed £500 which was seconded by Cllr Clarke with all in favour.

It was noted that the Memory Café volunteers have been nominated for the Stars of Teignbridge Award.

24/118. Questions and comments from the public:

None.

A member of the public thanked the Clerk for organising the forthcoming Green Fair.

24/119. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Major explained that the Household Support Fund is fully funded until March 2025 with money from government and will be expanded. It is open to anyone who needs support. Cllr Major to email a link to the Clerk

He gave a reminder on behalf of Cllr Stuart Rogers that the Cost of-Living event at Ashburton Town Hall will be held on Wednesday 20th November.

The Teignbridge District Council (TDC) assets review has been delayed again.

The Chair and Clerk raised issues concerning the allocation, practicalities and timescale of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Town Council has been asked by a local group to support the initiative of building very small homes known as Compact Housing which is being considered by TDC, but only part of Buckfastleigh lies within the TDC planning authority area where there are no allocated sites.

Cllr De Groot-Marzec: There is increasing concern that all TDC services are online and many cannot navigate the internet, afford it or have no signal. No telephone support service is provided to help with basic day to day needs such as buying a car parking permit.

Cllr Major confirmed that TDC are looking at ways to address this shortfall.

24/120. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest: None.

24/121. To review the Police Report for August 2024:

The increase and frequency of crimes within the town was noted. Cllr Clarke to attend the next Police Surgery to raise questions regarding this.

24/122. To discuss the remit of the Town Council's social media page:

Cllr De Groot-Marzec has started to post items on Facebook but with only the comment function at present. The Council should encourage people to attend meetings or ask questions to the office rather than use social media. The Town Council will however respond to significant numbers of comments e.g. the Christmas lights.

24/123. To note the External Auditor's Report and Certificate for 2023/24:

Noted with thanks to the Clerk for her due diligence.

24/124. Budget Analysis Report 01.08.24 – 31.08.24: Noted

24/125. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.08.24 – 31.08.24: Noted

24/126. Chair's Announcements:

The Chair expressed concern regarding how the community can support 4 cafes in the town when there is not enough custom.

Cllr Clarke recently met with volunteer officer at TDC who is interested in how the Council works.

The Council needs to have another discussion with Be Buckfastleigh regarding the future of the Hello Summer programme. How will delivery be funded and from where?

Action: To invite to the November meeting.

24/127. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:

Cllrs Georghiades and Burch have drafted a second letter to businesses regarding the Christmas lights donations.

24/128. Items requiring Urgent Attention: None

24/129. Summary of Key Messages:

Clerk to action.

Meeting closed at 9.20 pm.