

# BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

---

## **Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2026 at 7.00pm.**

**Present:** Councillors: Sue Clarke (Chair), John Bailey, Steven Burch, Paul Georghiades, Ron Fox, Ben Leaney (arrived at 7.45pm), Collette Luscombe, Sylvee Phillips and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

**In attendance:** Cllr Jack Major (Teignbridge District Council), Cllr Stuart Rogers (Teignbridge District Council and Devon County Council) arrived at 7.15pm and 2 representatives of the Friends of the Buckfastleigh Library

**Press:** None

**26/192. Apologies for absence:** No apologies

**Councillors invited to declare any interests:** None

## **26/193. To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2026 and review actions from this meeting:**

Minutes signed by Cllr Sue Clarke.

**Actions:** No actions to discuss

## **26/194. Newly co-opted Town Councillor Welcome:**

New Councillor Cem Luscombe (known as Cem) was welcomed by the Chair and duly enrolled.

## **26/195. Questions and comments from the public:**

None

The Chair brought forward Agenda No. 6

## **26/196. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:**

Cllr Major reported that Teignbridge District Council (TDC) Members are focused on the 2026/27 budget.

He assured the meeting that the tennis court lights will be reconnected as requested and that annual passes are available to the community by contacting TDC.

TDC have commissioned a new Playing Pitch Strategy to cover all pitch playing sports to assess whether current and future needs for these activities can be met across the district.

Members questioned the necessity and cost given the pending implications of Local Government Reorganisation.

The Clerk confirmed that she has responded to this survey on behalf of Buckfastleigh.

The meeting returned to Agenda No. 5

## **26/197. Request from the Friends of Buckfastleigh Library to support the campaign to object to new proposals for Buckfastleigh Library:**

There has been a good response to the online consultation with over 18,000 responses so far.

The proposal for Buckfastleigh is to reduce the opening hours from 15 to 6 per week on Thursday and Saturday mornings which is very restrictive and would not be open for children to access after school.

Representatives of the group met with Councillor Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin of Devon County Council and Kate Turner, Head of Library Services and Customer Services with Cllr Rogers and Clair Stevens, the Town Hall Manager to discuss the proposal. It was a difficult meeting as the Friends group were told that they should be fund-raising to pay for extra staff hours to extend the opening times and there is surprise that the Town Council has not offered to take over the library even though the Town Council has never been consulted. Library Services will however appoint two fundraisers at an additional cost.

The meeting did not address the issues raised, the proposal for Buckfastleigh is unfair, discriminatory and a disproportionate cut compared to other communities.

A joint response from the Town Council and the Friends group has been circulated and includes the request to change the banding which has not considered the demographics or level of use by each community.

Buckfastleigh is classified as a deprived area within Devon with poor public transport. Residents require access to books and resources. The town has been classified within the Band D rating when it should be Band C based on the 9,000 books which are issued annually. This proposal is ironic in the National Year of Reading which was launched in January 2026.

The Friends Group allege that incomplete data has been used to justify the proposed funding cuts and decisions have been taken before the consultation is closed.

Cllr Burch: Devon County Council will say that they are saving the libraries, but this process has highlighted how unfair this is for the more rural communities such as Buckfastleigh.

Cllr Clarke: Libraries are the only remaining free educational resource within our society but are not valued which makes them vulnerable to funding cuts.

Cllr Rogers gave an update upon arrival – he confirmed that £800,000 of the TDC Community Infrastructure Levy has been allocated towards a Community Match Fund.

The Government have set up the first ever UK Town of Culture competition. It is understood that the Ashburton Arts Centre and the Moor Imagination Collective intend to submit a joint bid but that the latter has not consulted with the Town Council to date which must be demonstrated in the application. Expressions of Interest should be submitted by the end of March.

A new development at Longstone Cross at Ashburton will provide 33 homes including 16 affordable dwellings. Buckfastleigh residents may apply through Devon Home Choice when properties become available if they have a local connection with Ashburton.

Following the devastating damage caused by recent storms Devon Highways have deferred some maintenance work across the region including the planned work for Buckfast Road.

A new residents energy survey will be undertaken in the spring – more information to follow.

**26/198. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:**

Further amendments to the proposed Timbers Road planning application for circa 75 dwellings have been received following an extension of time which the Clerk has responded to following consultation with Councillors.

**26/199. Local Government Reorganisation Update:**

Town Councillors agreed to meet on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February to discuss in detail the list of assets provided by TDC officers. To date no specific information or details have been provided regarding costs, liabilities, existing tenancies etc so the Town Council at this stage can only respond with a written Expression of Interest.

**26/200. Budget Analysis Report 01.01.26 – 31.01.26:**

Noted.

**26/201. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.01.26 – 31.01.26:**

Noted.

**26/202. Chairs Announcements.**

Cllr Clarke will attend the TDC Council meeting scheduled for 26<sup>th</sup> February to ask her supplementary question regarding the unanswered questions concerning unspent Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) interest. This has allegedly been used to fund procedural matters instead of infrastructure and why there is no investment in the rural areas. Why are TDC finances so dependent upon CIL income?

**26/203. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting.**

Cllr Burch gave a brief update about the Cosy Cinema following the second screening on Valentines Day and positive feedback from residents.

**.26/204. Items requiring urgent attention.**

No items to be brought to the attention of Members.

**26/205. Summary of Key Messages**

Clerk to action.

**26/206: Motion to move into a Part II (private) session to discuss items of confidential business in accordance with Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972**

**The meeting returned to Part I and closed at 9.10pm**