

# BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

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

**Present:** Councillors: Paul Georghiades (Deputy Chair), Steven Burch, Sue Clarke (Chair), Rod Denley Jones, Ron Fox, Collette Luscombe, Sylvee Phillips and Judith Hart (Town Clerk).

**In attendance:** Cllr Stuart Rogers (Teignbridge District Council and Devon County Council) arrived at 7.15pm, Sophie Lovett (Moor Imagination Collective) and Phil Nortcott (Victoria Park) arrived at 8.00pm

**Press:** None

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Paul Georghiades

**26/207. Apologies for absence:** Cllrs John Bailey and Ben Leaney

**Councillors invited to declare any interests:** Councillors Ron Fox and Sue Clarke as Victoria Park trustees

**26/208. To approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2026 and review actions from this meeting:**

Minutes signed by Cllr Paul Georghiades

**Actions:** No actions to discuss

**26/209. Newly co-opted Town Councillor Welcome:**

New Councillor Rod Denley Jones was welcomed by the Deputy Chair and duly enrolled.

Agenda Item No. 14) was brought forward by the Deputy Chair

**26/210. Items requiring Urgent Items:**

Sophie Lovett from Moor Imagination Collective (MIC) advised the meeting that they had been approached by the Ashburton Arts Centre to undertake a joint bid to the UK Town of Culture competition and that it would help to have the support of the Town Council together with Ashburton Town Council regarding the first part of the process; an Expression of Interest which must be submitted by the end of March.

If shortlisted the group would receive £60,000 to work up the bid which is about celebrating the town's history and would include a creative community consultation. It is felt that Buckfastleigh has a more varied cultural heritage than the average town of a comparable size and demographic in the UK. The winner will be awarded £3 million to help deliver a cultural programme during the summer of 2028 with two runners-up receiving £250,00 each.

Ashburton and Buckfastleigh have a unique shared history and geography, and the bid will include as many voices as possible much of which is already held in an oral history archive in The Valiant Soldier museum.

Cllr Stephen Burch: It is essential that the Town Council is central to this bid and he would be disappointed if not included in this process.

Cllr Rogers confirmed that the bid needs the backing of Devon County Council.

It was noted that there are other wool towns such as Cullompton and at least 30 towns have already submitted an Expression of Interest. Ashburton Arts Centre are leading the bid and it was agreed that The Valiant Soldier should be involved too.

Cllr Paul Georghiadis acknowledged that the Town Council does not have the capacity to undertake a bid of this size but would like to offer the Council's support.

**Action:** Clerk to write a letter of support for the Expression of Interest.

**26/211. Questions and comments from the public:**

None

**26/212. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:**

No matters to report

**26/113. To review the Police Reports for January to February 2026:**

Cllr Sue Clarke questioned how local Police are responding to increasing violence against women and girls. Is this data collected locally and can it be added to this monthly report?

**Action:** Cllr Clarke to make this request.

7.15pm Cllr Stuart Rogers arrived and the meeting returned to the agenda.

**26/214. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:**

Cllr Rogers advised that he is awaiting guidance regarding the new Resilience Fund and will communicate what this means in due course.

Devon County Council (DCC) have proposed a 'One Devon Door' approach which will take resources and services to rural communities to help people on low incomes who cannot access services due to transport costs. Both Buckfastleigh and Ashburton have been included on the list to support rural towns and DCC will be working up a plan to support the economy of the town.

Following the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025 between parish representatives from Cllr Roger's Ward with senior officers from DCC, Teignbridge District Council (TDC) and Dartmoor National, a second meeting will be held at Buckfastleigh Town Hall on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

The Devon Libraries consultation has now closed with over 25,500 responses. Cllr Rogers will be attending a DCC Cabinet meeting to support a bid for Buckfastleigh to expand the library and improve the Town Hall as a new community hub.

TDC has assigned some funding for play parks and Cllr Rogers will be meeting with other Members to discuss this further, but match-funding will be required too.

Cllr Clarke pointed out that play parks need accessible public toilets too.

**26/215. Local Government Reorganisation Update:**

Teignbridge District Council will still be going ahead with an election in 2027 together with the Towns and Parishes. Exeter and Plymouth have elections in May 2026.

The Devon LGR consultation ends on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026. Cllr Clarke and the Clerk had attended an online LGR session hosted by the Devon Association of Local Councils in early March.

**Action:** Clerk to submit a response highlighting the challenges, lack of resources and unanswered questions regarding the proposed transfer of assets to the towns and parishes.

**26/216. To review and approve ring-fenced reserves to carry over to 2026/27:**

**Decision:** Resolved unanimously. Clerk to action as part of end of year procedures.

**26/217. Budget Analysis Report 01.02.26 – 28.02.26:**

Noted.

**26/218. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.02.26 – 28.02.26:**

Noted.

**26/219. Chairs Announcements.**

Cllr Clarke attended the TDC full Council meeting in February to question the approach by TDC to transfer to a Unitary Authority with no debt but in the meantime failing to invest in the maintenance and refurbishment of decaying assets. Awaiting a written response.

It was noted that Ashburton Town Council has held some consultation events regarding the transfer of assets from TDC within their parish and are proposing to hold a referendum to determine what should be transferred.

Members agreed that the cost of a referendum would not be an effective use of the precept and there has already been significant support from residents and local businesses to retain the public toilets in Woodholme car park.

Cllr Fox stressed that the Town Councillors are appointed to act on behalf of the residents and should be trusted to act in their best interests.

Members agreed that there is a lack of understanding and interest in LGR and how this will impact residents and the amount of Council Tax they pay in the future.

**Action:** Clerk to post relevant information when available.

**26/220. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting.**

Cllr Phillips: there has been a proposal to change local elections from every four to five years.

Cllr Burch has had an initial discussion with some local businesses regarding the appetite to resurrect the Chamber of Trade.

**26/221. Summary of Key Messages**

Clerk to action.

**26/222: 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 8.35pm**