BUCKFASTLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Wednesday 19th August 2026 at 7.00pm

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

In attendance: Cllr Stuart Rogers (Devon County Council & Teignbridge District Council), Cllrs Jack Major and John Nutley (Teignbridge District Council) and 7 members of the public

Press: None

In the absence of the Chair the first part of the meeting was chaired by Cllr Rod Denley Jones (Deputy Chair)

26/97. Apologies for absence: No apologies received

Councillors invited to declare any interests: None

26/98. To approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 15th July 2026 and review actions from this meeting:

Minutes signed by Cllr Rod Denley Jones

Actions: No actions to report

26/99. Questions and comments from the public: None

26/100. Questions to District and County Councillors and comments on reports relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Rogers confirmed that the proposed new 20mph speed limit in Buckfastleigh will be advertised in the press with effect from 20th August 2026. The public are encouraged to view the plans and comment or submit objections by 11th September to Devon County Council (DCC).

The energy price cap increased on 1st July 2026 and may increase again later in the year placing further financial burden on struggling households.

How to improve fire safety in your home will be delivered to residents as a response to the increasing number of fires and risk of wildfires in the UK.

Cllr Rogers reiterated the importance of completing the new Teignbridge District Council (TDC) play parks consultation. The Clerk confirmed that in addition to notices around the town information will be published on the Town Council's website and social media page with a link to the consultation. Schools and local youth organisations are being asked to support this too so that there is investment in the towns play areas. The survey closes on 27th September 2026.

A member of the public asked why Strode Road cannot have a pedestrian crossing?

Strode/Dart Bridge Road does not meet the statutory criteria, and it is used frequently as a diversion for the A38 when works are required.

Cllr Nutley referred to the play park consultation and advised that 37 have been identified

across Teignbridge as needing an upgrade with Buckfastleigh having priority. He agrees that both Buckfastleigh and Ashburton are out on a limb and often miss out on investment opportunities.

Cllr Denley Jones advised the meeting that both he, Cllrs Luscombe, Phillips and the Town Clerk had a positive meeting TDC Officers regarding the new consultation and that he hopes the bid for funding for Buckfastleigh is successful.

There will be site visits to the play parks by Members and Officers in due course.

Cllr Clarke asked about TDC Cllr MacGregor's play park amendment at the TDC July full Council meeting to ring-fence £400,000 for the 3 communities that do not benefit from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or s106 funding namely Buckfastleigh, Ashburton and Starcross and why Cllrs Major and Nutley did not vote in favour of this?

Cllr Nutley explained that if they had supported this it would have restricted the amount available to the Dartmoor communities and some communities would not be selected.

Cllr Rogers abstained from voting because the questions he raised about this amendment were not answered.

£3 million has been allocated, £1 million of this is from CIL funding which can be spent anywhere within the Teignbridge area. If the amendment had been agreed Buckfastleigh may have not been awarded any money for any of the 3 play parks identified.

As Buckfastleigh is statistically the third most deprived town in Devon below Ilfracombe and Barnstaple this makes it the most deprived community within Teignbridge.

There have already been 350 responses to the play park consultation within the first few days of it going live.

26/101. Planning Applications for commercial sites and areas of significant development or interest:

None

26/102. To review the Police Reports for July to August 2026:

Following a request by the Town Council statistical information regarding crimes against women and girls are now included in this report.

The Manager of the Foodbank has noticed that more women are coming forward to report domestic violence and ask for help.

26/103. Local Government Reorganisation Update:

This will be discussed at the Devon County Council meeting scheduled for 9th September 2026.

Members were disappointed that the new Prime Minister, Andy Burnham did not engage with DCC during his recent visit to Devon.

68% of the roads in Devon lie within the new Coast and Countryside Unity Authority and yet no funds have been identified to support maintenance. The rural communities of Devon have lost to the larger towns and cities cherry picking the wealthier areas of the country to extend their boundaries and enhance their income.

The new rural authority has no obvious centre for administration as it covers such a huge area from East to West and North to South. How will the new Wards work? Ashburton and Buckfastleigh will remain roughly the same size but with only 2 Unitary Councillors rather than 3. Where will they be based and will the new authority only be funded by revenue from Council Tax?

26/103. To respond to the Dartmoor Local Plan 2026 Online Consultation Survey:

Cllr Phillips has responded on behalf of the Town Council and was thanked for taking on this task.

26/104. To discuss, identify and agree by resolution the next stage of the Teignbridge District Council asset transfer process:

Cllr Denley Jones provided a summary of what has been discussed at Council meetings, meetings with TDC officers and Members, and consultation with residents. None of the assets identified for transfer by TDC generate any significant revenue and there will be no additional funding to run them so all costs would need to be met from the Town Council's precept which would need a significant increase.

The following assets have therefore been identified:

1. The public toilets in Woodholme car park following residents and business owner feedback to the TDC consultation and the Town Council. It is agreed that this is basic human need which is essential for children using the adjacent park, residents, visitors, services and local businesses;
2. Buckfast play park - acknowledging the health benefits of outdoor play for children and to retain the only publicly owned amenity in the village;
3. Ram Corner – the green space, bus shelter and path at the junction of Strode Road and Plymouth Road to maintain and enhance as an attractive gateway to the town promoting biodiversity.

Cllr Luscombe acknowledged that her initial response to the proposed asset transfer was to protect everything for the future of the town but now recognises that this aspiration is not affordable for the Town Council.

Cllr Clarke stressed the numerous, costly and historical liabilities of taking on the Duckspond/Hamlyns playing field and the amenities included within this site.

Cllr Georghiades arrived at 7.50pm and resumed as Chair.

The Clerk reiterated how the lack of resources, funding, capacity and staff would not have met the responsibilities required to take on so many assets and how this would have placed an unprecedented burden on the Town Council's share of the Council Tax paid by residents.

Cllr Fox stressed that the assets offered are actually liabilities.

All the other assets not identified above will either be transferred to the new Unitary Authority or put up for sale which is why it is important to protect the play park at Buckfast for future generations. The community will also have a voice regarding the future of publicly owned assets in the town.

Representatives of the Scout group asked what will now happen regarding their request for a

scout hut in the Duckspond/Hamlyns playing field and can the Town Council just ask for a section of the park specifically for this purpose?

It was confirmed that the Council cannot cherry pick parts of the park which comes as one parcel of land. Cllr Rogers advised that it would cost £250-£300,000 to build a new dedicated scout hut on this land.

Decision: To resolve the acquisition of the public toilets, Buckfast play park and Ram Corner with the option to consider the transfer of one or both play parks at Glebelands and Market Close if refurbished by TDC following the current play park consultation. All Members voted in favour.

Action: Clerk to advise TDC accordingly and await due process.

The Clerk was thanked by Cllr Rogers which was supported by the Town Councillors for her work on the asset transfer proposal and due diligence regarding Town Council finances.

Cllrs Major and Nutley left the meeting at 8.10pm.

26/105. To summarise the meeting held on 17th July 2026 regarding proposals for the Library and Town Hall:

Cllr Denley Jones, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk/Town Hall Manager attended this meeting facilitated by Cllr Rogers with representation from various organisations including Libraries Unlimited.

Much of the meeting was a discussion about expanding the library service within the Town Hall. There was no representation from Public Health.

There had been the threat of reducing the current number of hours the library was open but following the success of the public consultation the library will continue to be open to the public for 15 hours per week with a member of staff. The library however needs more space for its activities and greater access and would like to expand into the rooms currently occupied by the Town Council and Town Council staff. No funding was offered to relocate the staff, there will not be any additional library staff hours, although the library could facilitate an automated service or an increase in the rent paid to the Town Hall to reflect the increase in size.

Cllr Rogers has put a lot of work into this proposition, and the Council acknowledges the importance of the library service in the town.

Moving forward a development plan for the Town Hall is needed and must be led by the charity trustees.

It was also noted that the Foodbank may lose its premises due to the deteriorating condition of its current venue, St. Luke's Church.

26/106. Budget Analysis Report 01.07.26 – 31.07.26:

Noted

26/107. Bank Payments Report and Bank Statement 01.07.26 – 31.07.26:

Noted.

26/108. To appoint a new Town Council bank account signatory:

Decision: Following Cllr John Bailey's recent resignation, Cllr Cem Luscombe was appointed as the fourth signatory to the Town Council bank account.

26/109. Chairs Announcements:

The Chair acknowledged the unexpected resignation of Councillor John Bailey due to ill health who has served on the Town Council since May 2019. John was a valued member of the team offering his experience and knowledge for the benefit of residents and businesses in the town and will be sorely missed by his colleagues. A letter of thanks on behalf of the Town Council and Town Hall will be sent by the Chair.

26/110. Councillor updates relevant to this meeting:

Cllr Clarke advised that she is receiving a significant number of emails from the public and she is supporting the police with one local issue.

Cllr Phillips has received positive feedback regarding the provision of a monthly police surgery in the Town Hall.

Following the delivery of the Town Council newsletter about the proposed asset transfer and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) it is noted that the public are generally against the implications of LGR and being part of a new authority which is unlikely to serve all areas effectively due to its size, lack of funding and no obvious centre of administration.

26/111. Summary of Key Messages:

Clerk to action.

26/112. 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:

- **To agree backdated commencement dates for the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk under the Local Government Pension Scheme**

Meeting returned to Part I and closed at 8.45pm