

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
OF BUCKLAND BREWER PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON  
WEDNESDAY 7<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2020 AT 7:30pm  
(MEETING HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM)**

**Members Present:** Mrs Barbara Babb, Mr Andrew Hewitt, Mr Richard Hooper, Mr Jim Lowe, Mr Trevor Mills, Mr David Watson and Mr Bob Wilson

**Also in attendance:** Martin Rich (Devon Communities Together), Cllr Barry Parsons (DCC) and 16 members of the public

**Parish Clerk:** Mr P Blosse

**KEY:** Actions are shown in bold blue type      Decisions are shown in bold red type

251.	Apologies for Absence	None
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**252. Declarations of Interest** Richard Hooper said that a rumour had circulated that he was a member of the consortium that was considering applying to have the Coach and Horses listed as a community asset under the Community Right to Bid scheme. He wished to make it clear that, although he was acting as their spokesman and had attended a meeting with them with officers from Torridge District Council, he has no financial interest in the consortium.

**253. Public Participation** Nick Gill reminded the Council that he had written to them on 21st September outlining his objection to the application for change of use of the Coach and Horses from a pub to a dwelling. His opinion was that there was one decisive and objective argument why the Parish Council should object based on its clear statements, in its Settlement Plan and elsewhere, that the parish needed to retain its facilities, such as the pub, shop and village hall, in order to achieve its plan of developing the community. He thought that the loss of the pub could seriously jeopardise the proposed development of more housing in the parish.

Brenda Mills asked whether the proposal to include three car parking spaces included one for Innkeepers Cottage but no-one present could answer her question.

Martin Rich from Devon Communities Together introduced himself and outlined how he could assist with developing a community share offer, putting together a project group, developing a feasibility study, obtaining a professional valuation and securing legal advice. His organisation had enjoyed successes with setting up community shops but establishing community led pubs posed more pitfalls and such schemes needed to be tailored to suit each community.

Cllr. Jim Lowe said that the Settlement Plan was written in 2013 but that Torridge Council had by-passed the plan more than once already by granting permission to developments on plots that were not included in the Settlement Plan. A government white paper on planning reform is also likely to have a significant impact on future planning decisions. Cllr. Andrew Hewitt agreed, but said that the Parish Council still regarded the Settlement Plan as its guide for future developments. Paul Carter agreed with Nick Gill's views and said that Buckland Brewer was a developing village and needed to retain its pub.

Cllr. Trevor Mills was concerned about an article in a local paper that laid some of the blame for the pub's decline on the new village hall. He pointed out that, although the hall has a drinks licence, it holds less than one event a month where alcohol is consumed. Cllr. Jim Lowe believed that there were fewer such events than there had been in the previous village hall and Cllr. George Heywood felt that, in fact, the hall and the pub supported each other. Paul Davies suggested that the Village Hall Trustees should write a reply.

**254. Planning: Application: 1/0636/2020/FUL and 1/0637/2020/FUL, Coach and Horses Inn, Change of use from public house, to residential unit with annexe and associated works** Cllr. Richard Hooper said the parish needed to retain its pub and that a local consortium had informed him that it was ready to take on the pub as a business venture and had identified a potential lessee to manage it. Although he said that the consortium had a business plan and finance in place there was nothing written down that could be presented at the present time.

Cllr. Lowe wanted to save the pub and suggested that the problem should be tackled with short, medium and long-term plans. Firstly, it was necessary to tackle the 10:00pm closing time rule and then to support the publicans through the next 18-24 months. He thought no-one would buy the pub during the current Covid-19 restrictions. He said that the best way to keep the pub in the long term would be to support the application but to trust the current owners not to sell it for the next 2 years.

Cllr. Heywood agreed that no buyer is likely to be found at the moment and asked if the planning application could be delayed. The Clerk and Chair believed this would be unlikely. George Heywood said that publicans have a right to maximise their income and that the loss of the pub could reduce the average value of properties by £10,000. He did not want the Parish Council involved in running the pub, but suggested that it should appoint a valuer. Martin Rich advised strongly against this. He said that it would be the consortium/project team's responsibility to appoint a valuer and any other professional advisers. Martin said that, if the property came to the market and a Community Asset Order was in place, the consortium would be given 6 months to develop its bid. However, the seller would be under no obligation to sell to them.

Cllr. David Watson understood that the current owners want to give up the pub and that they wish to sell it for as much as they can. He was happy for the consortium to put together its proposals but, in the meantime, the Parish Council needed to make a decision about the plan before it.

Cllr. Barbara Babb said that the owners have a right to stop trading and believed that the consortium was trying to drive the price down. She said that they would need to apply for community listing straight away, that the Parish Council should support the application and agreed that the pub would remain open for at least the next 18 months.

Cllr. Andrew Hewitt said that he had full sympathy for the current owners and agreed that they should have the right to maximise their income. Cllr. Trevor Mills said that the Parish Council should object and that, if the application were turned down, the applicants would need to re-apply. Cllr. David Watson said that if the consortium wants to apply for Community Asset status they need to do it quickly. Martin Rich confirmed that the application would need to be approved before the planning application was granted permission if it were to be effective.

County Councillor Barry Parsons recognised the Parish Council's need to balance competing demands. He was not able to offer any advice about the planning process as that was a District rather than a County Council matter, but he said he would not want to see the Parish Council getting involved in listing the pub as a community asset.

Cllr. Jim Lowe pointed out that there were not many objections recorded on the planning website. Cllr. Richard Hooper said there were over 30 but Jim Lowe suggested there should be many more if the community was genuinely concerned. The Clerk reminded members of the public who had written to the Parish Council that, for their objections to be properly recorded, they needed to be sent to Torridge Planning.

The Chair called for a vote: **3 members voted to support the application, 5 members voted to object. It was agreed that the consultee response would include a clarification about the relationship between the pub and the village hall and its disappointment about the wording in the local newspaper article. It was also agreed that Councillor Phil Pennington would be asked to call-in the application in the event that officers were minded to grant permission.** (This would ensure that the plan would be presented to the Plans Committee at which Parish Councillors and members of the public could contribute their points of view.)

Cllr. Andrew Hewitt undertook to contact Torridge Planning the next day to ask whether a decision on the plan could be delayed.

Martin Rich offered to share his contact details with members of the consortium via Richard Hooper.

**There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:50 pm**

#### **Dates of Future Meetings:**

Parish Council, Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020 (7:30pm, remotely via Zoom))

**Signed as a true record:**

**Chairman:** ..... **Date:** .....