

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
OF BUCKLAND BREWER PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON  
WEDNESDAY 13<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2021 AT 7:30pm  
(MEETING HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM)**

**Members Present:** Mrs Barbara Babb, Mr Andrew Hewitt, Mr George Heywood, Mr Richard Hooper, Mr Jim Lowe, Mr Trevor Mills, Mr Frits Takken, and Mr David Watson

**Also in attendance:** Cllr. Phil Pennington (TDC) (*Part I items only*)

**Parish Clerk:** Mr P Blosse

<b>KEY: Actions are shown in bold blue type Decisions are shown in bold red type</b>
--

*Members discussed item 314 first under Part II rules with press and public excluded (314.  
Minutes and report of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 7th  
January 2021)*

**309. Apologies for Absence** Cllr Barry Parsons

**310. Declarations of Interest** None. The Clerk reminded members that a dispensation had been approved to enable all councillors to debate and vote on all issues affecting budget and precept setting.

**311. Minutes of the Meetings of the Parish Council held on 9<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020:**  
The minutes of the meetings held on 9<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020 were agreed and will be signed by the Chair in due course. (Proposed by Jim Lowe and seconded by George Heywood)

**312. Public Participation** None

**313. Annual Budget and Precept Setting** The Clerk had previously distributed a draft budget which included items that had been discussed or suggested at earlier meetings. He explained briefly how the process of precept setting worked and that there was no government imposed cap on the amount that parishes could raise in Council Tax but that they can only spend on services that they are empowered to in law. A small increase in the taxbase means that a nil increase in the band D tax rate would raise an additional £115 in council tax. The following significant items were approved:

**Expenditure**

**One-off items**

- Replacement laptop and software upgrade - £500
- Drainage and fencing works at Portway - £2,000
- New bench for village green - £250

- Telephone box refurbishment and moving defibrillator - £500 (2020/21 item to be offset by Councillor Grant of £250)

#### **Ongoing Revenue Commitments**

- Parish Gardener - £600
- Increase to Clerk's salary - £1,400
- Budget for cutting the amenity field removed
- Increase in direct grant to Playing Field Association - £500
- Grass cutting, Playing Field Association - £1,000

#### **Reserves**

- Underspend in 2020/21 on a proposed adult fitness suite to be carried forward as an earmarked reserve - £5,000

#### **Income**

- There would no longer be income from the turbine as this was now being paid directly to the Education Support Fund
- Increase in precept - £1,000

It was noted that these proposals would result in a budget deficit in 2021/22 of £880 and that the increase in precept would add £2.63 per year to a band D council tax bill (an increase of 7.02%). This was compared to increasing the average council tax by less than the price of a cup of coffee. Members felt that a good balance had been achieved between passing on some of the significant spending increases like the additional playing field expenses to the parishioners against absorbing some of the costs from reserves.

The Clerk will revise the draft budget based on the proposals agreed at this meeting. The final budget and precept for next year will be approved at the next meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

#### **Additional items dealt with as emergency issues and for information only:**

- a. **Street Naming, 5 dwellings off Tower Hill** The developer had made another suggestion in the hope that referring the decision to the Community and Resources Committee could be avoided. This was 'Capern Park'. Members noted that the matter had not attracted any public interest at earlier meetings and that there would be no advantage in delaying a decision. The developer's latest suggestion was **approved unanimously.**
- b. **Future Parish Council Meetings** Jim Lowe noted that refurbishment work on the chapel was nearly complete and that it would make an ideal space for parish council meetings once the covid-19 restrictions were lifted. Barbara Babb suggested that the church school room could also be used, perhaps only in the summer months due to the difficulty of negotiating the cobbled path in the dark. This suggestion was not generally supported. However, it was agreed that the parish council should try to organise some meetings at the Thornhillhead Chapel again and that the lack of a broadband connection would need to be worked around. **The Clerk will contact both organisations to check availability.**

- c. Road Closure, South West Water works** Parishioners has raised concerns about a road closure because of the inconvenience in the village and the inappropriate diversion. Jane Lowe had been in touch with South West Water and Devon Highways and had added an item to website. One consequence is that there will be no bus service on 25<sup>th</sup> January. If emergency transport is needed, residents can phone DCC who might be able to organise a taxi.
- d. Update from Cllr Phil Pennington**
- i) Cllr Pennington said that Torridge Council would probably be announcing an increase in council tax at the maximum amount permitted without a referendum (2.99%).
  - ii) He also reported that he had money available from the Councillor Grants Scheme if the parish council needed any funds for a special project. It was agreed that the council would apply for a grant of £250 towards the cost of refurbishing the telephone box and moving the defibrillator.
  - iii) He said that he did not know when the planning application for the Coach and Horses change of use would be presented to the Plans Committee.
  - iv) George Heywood asked whether Torridge Council had kept back any of the covid grant money or if it had all been distributed. Cllr Pennington said that there was some concern about loopholes in the system with some grants going to holiday/second homeowners. He said that the scheme is a discretionary one and that officers consider each case against the criteria but that some people, especially self-employed, small business owners, are losing out. Jim Lowe pointed out that the main thrust of the scheme was to save jobs but many organisations, such as the local village hall and shop had received substantial grants but employed no staff. Cllr Pennington agreed that there were some anomalies that resulted in some people who were better off gaining from the system. George Heywood said that the District Council should be helping out those who were not gaining from the scheme.

**There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:55 pm**

**Dates of Future Meetings:**

Parish Council, Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 (7:30pm, remotely via Zoom)

**Signed as a true record:**

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