

BUCKFASTLEIGH WEST PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 2nd April 2024 at 8.55pm in Scoriton Village Hall

Present – Cllrs Brent (Chairman), Feasey, Knowling, Le Marchant, Niering, Owen & Rolls and the Clerk - Karen Gilbert

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - NONE

Full reports available from the Clerk - all reports circulated to Cllrs in advance

SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL - FULL REPORT AVAILABLE FROM CLERK

Devolution At our March meeting the Council voted to express concerns over the proposed Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal (creating a new Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority). These include:

The proposal risks making local government more complex by adding a layer of bureaucracy

The proposed £16m capital funding was only for the next two years

The fact that spending plans must be signed-off by central government disqualifies the plan from being true devolution of powers

The proposed combined authority's remoteness and lack of democratic accountability, including the lack of voting rights for District Councils, further disqualifies it from being described as "devolution"

The government's document indicates that this is the first step in the reorganisation of local government in Devon and Torbay. We are concerned that the intention as stated threatens the existence of district councils, the loss of effective local governance and may establish rule by a body that is remote and out of touch.

The cost and additional layer of local government will in itself hamper any improvement in the local services it is intended to improve and may result in their decline.

The Council called for the process to be postponed pending the outcome of the forthcoming General Election and 2025 County Council elections.

If and when the devolution deal proceeds the council proposes that an element of the Small Sites Green Investment programme be allocated to support community-led housing developments to improve energy efficiency, reduce embedded carbon and improve biodiversity.

Hunting At the same meeting Council voted to not allow meetings of hunts on land it owns. Among the reasons were concern over public safety from gatherings of horses and hounds.

DEVON COUNTY - Cllr Dan Thomas

This year has seen dire warnings about local authorities "going bankrupt", slashing services and imposing double digit council tax increases. A new report by DCC Director of Finance, Angie Sinclair, predicts that the revenue budget of just under £700 million will effectively break even in April with a small overspend of £291,000 currently being forecast.

Her report covers the current financial year to the end of January with two more months to go. She says:

"Financial risks within adult social care and children and young people are still being experienced but the work underway across the authority to support these pressures continues to ensure the whole organisation is focused on achieving a break-even position for the end of the year.

“The position has improved significantly since Month 8, with the forecast overspend reducing from £4.5 million to nearly breakeven, and demonstrates strong financial management.

“The forecast break-even position is a huge achievement and the result of a continued focus on financial control and would not have been possible without the authority pulling together as One Devon and our work with our partners.

“This is mitigating and responding to in-year pressures, delivering planned savings and providing services within the budgets agreed.”

Councillors heard the figures included the £10 million savings that were needed to create a reserve to satisfy the Government on their offer of financial support for our spending deficit on special needs education or SEND.

24/04/01 Apologies for absence. County Cllr Thomas

24/04/02 Approval of Minutes - The Minutes of the regular meeting held on 5th March 2024 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record

24/04/03. Declarations of interest - None **Dispensation requests** None

24/04/04- PC admin - Nothing

24/04/05 Clerks Report - Nothing

24/04/06- Planning

NO NEW PLANNING

24/04/07 Finance -

a) **Approval of cheques** - **AGREED** by all

KAREN GILBERT	EXPENSES 03/24	£41.00
DALC	SUBS	£115.22.
J WIDDICOMBE	LENGTHSMAN	£198.00

24/04/08 Councillor reports

a) **Tree Warden report.** - None

b) **Councillors reports from other meetings.**

c) **Footpaths Warden Report.** - No issues .

REPORTS GIVEN AT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

24/04/09 - Village Matters - Highways

Various areas of highway drainage were discussed - also potholes

It was NOTED that reporting highway issues online to Devon County was highly effective

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/report-a-pothole/>

The Clerk was asked to report an episode of fly tipping at Cross Furze

24/04/10. Annual Parish Council Meeting 7th May 2024 at 7.00pm
followed by brief regular meeting

24/04/11 - NOT REQUIRED

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.10pm