

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

OF BUCKLAND BREWER HELD ON

THURSDAY 28th APRIL 2022

AT BUCKLAND BREWER METHODIST CHAPEL

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: 9 members of the public and Ken James (Guest Speaker), Leader of Torridge District Council

Parish Clerk: Mr P Blosse

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

1. **Introduction and review of the year by Andrew Hewitt, Chairman** Andrew gave a brief overview of what had been a busy year for the Parish Council. Barry Parsons had retired from his role as County Councillor in May 2021 and had been replaced by James Morrish. James has close contacts with Buckland Brewer and was at one time Leader of Torridge Council. Andrew mentioned the following list of activities and achievements from the past year:
 - a. Reports of sewage in the stream at Cherry Vale were investigated. The Council has joined a scheme to monitor water levels in our local streams and river, with a number of volunteers contributing their time
 - b. A Neighbourhood Plan had been considered in some depth, but the decision had been taken not to pursue it.
 - c. The Council had also considered setting up a Community Land Trust for the building of a few affordable homes. This scheme is on the back burner pending the 2 large developments yet to be started at Orleigh Close and Southwood Meadows that are currently offering 17 affordable houses between them.
 - d. We had joined a scheme for inspecting and maintaining the parish's footpaths in a joint arrangement with Devon County Council. Cllr Richard Hooper is leading the project.
 - e. In October 2021, the Council had run a successful Climate Change Awareness Day
 - f. We are actively looking at creating a small development of about 6 small industrial units on part of Blackhorse Fields
 - g. One of our field tenants, Phil Slocombe, offered part of his field for a small tree-planting scheme. The scheme was completed quickly by Phil and his son, Jim, and grants were secured from Torridge Council and AONB towards the cost.
 - h. An orchard of 20 apple trees and an oak in celebration of the Platinum Jubilee were planted in the amenity field
 - i. Another defibrillator is being planned for Thornhillhead
 - j. At long last, the lease of the field behind the school to Buckland Brewer School is almost settled and the school is now able to use it.

- k. Andrew Heywood from Hicks & Co. has kept the Council informed about the future funding and management opportunities for the SSSI at Thornhillhead Moor
- l. Earlier this month a spring-cleaning day was held. 14 volunteers filled 12 black bags with rubbish from the village and some of the surrounding roads. It is hoped that this will become an annual event.
- m. The Council is about to embark on an Emergency Plan for which volunteers will be needed for a working group

Andrew thanked Jane Lowe and Pat Blossie for their work throughout the year as Webmaster and Parish Clerk respectively.

2. Guest Speaker, Ken James, Leader of Torridge Council Cllr Ken James moved into the area 48 years ago. He had started out as a Forward Planning Engineer but had later followed his dream to become a dairy farmer. He is involved with numerous voluntary organisations and has been Leader of Torridge District Council for the past 3 years, during which time he has seen some drastic changes. He touched on a number of subjects:

- a. A problem with the management of the Holsworthy Agri-centre has been resolved, albeit at some expense to the Council.
- b. Torridge has 25 properties managed through Community Land Trusts. It has ambitions to restart its own Housing Account and is liaising with North Devon Council and Aster Housing, and also looking at supporting more Community Land Trusts. It's previous housing stock is now managed by Westward Housing. Central Government is trying to persuade authorities to elect mayors. Torridge, as with most authorities in Devon, is not in favour of this. Devon authorities are therefore investigating setting up a countywide housing organisation.
- c. Devon's share of Levelling Up money is £20 million compared to Cornwall's £132 million.
- d. Torridge's grant settlement is the lowest in the country. Officers have made representation to Central Government but, in the meantime, they are looking at ways to save money and, if necessary, reduce services, such as closing public toilets.
- e. Torridge has recently established an in-house provider for its leisure services. There has been a problem with the booking system that should be resolved soon.
- f. There is a desire to develop a new environmental centre so that all waste can be dealt with locally. In response to a question from Alan Sutton, Ken said that no waste goes into landfill any longer. He confirmed that green waste recycling had increased by £10 a year to £45 but, in spite of this, more people are registering for it. They are not yet considering three-weekly general waste collections.
- g. Jim Lowe said that the Parish Council is very concerned about affordable housing. Two anticipated developments in the village currently specify 17 affordable homes and asked Torridge to try to ensure that these remained,

- h. In response to a questions from George Heywood, Ken said that the cost of settling the dispute with Kivells over the Holsworthy Agri-Business Centre was less than £1 million and that no government grant monies are ever given back to the government.
- i. Lastly, Ken said that Torridge has a pot of £36,000 for grants for underprivileged families and that this should soon be topped up by a further £60,000 from Devon County Council.

At this point the Chair, Andrew Hewitt, asked for one minute's silence in respect to David Blight who had died on the previous Sunday. David had been a stalwart member of the community with links to many local organisations.

- 3. **Emergency Planning – Creating a Working Party** Andrew said that the Parish Council is starting the process of developing a comprehensive Emergency Plan and asked the people present to consider taking an active part in a working group. Jo Miles and Alan Sutton expressed an interest. Four place will be booked on Devon Communities Together's Community Resilience Day at Filleigh Village Hall on 23rd May. An open meeting to establish the working group will be held in the Methodist Church on Thursday 26th May 2022.
- 4. **Becoming a Parish Councillor – a new 4-year term starts in May 2023** Andrew said that the coming year is the last of the present 4-year term of the Parish Council and elections (if necessary) are due to take place in May 2023. The Parish Council has already started a campaign to advertise the need to attract new councillors. It is expected that there will be a number of the present councillors who will not want to stand again. Anyone interested should contact the Parish Clerk or any of the Parish Councillors.
- 5. **Open Forum:** Alan Sutton asked about the recent Transport Survey. The Clerk reported that only 20 responses had been received which included only three from people who used the 372 bus at all regularly. Councillors reassured Alan that they were very keen to keep and, if possible, to improve the bus service but this is a County funded service and their funding has been seriously cut in recent years.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:10 pm

Signed:..... (Chair)

Date: