

Bampton Town Council

The Minutes of the Meeting of Bampton Town Council held in the LARC building on Monday 6th January 2025 at 7.00 pm.

Members Present – Cllr S Fouracre (Chair); Cllr R White; Cllr B Boyles; Cllr L Brock; Cllr R Brooker; Cllr R Grabke; Cllr L Bull and Cllr N Bull.

In attendance: County Cllr R Chesterton, District Cllr C Adcock; 3 members of the public and Mrs J Larcombe (Interim Clerk).

- 1. Apologies and Acceptance for Absence:** Apologies had been received from Cllr Whiteway. It was agreed that his apologies would not be accepted.
- 2. Declarations Of Interest:** No declarations of interest.
- 3. Public Discussion:** Judi Thomas informed the Council about an open community event on Saturday March 1st from 10:00 to 12:30 in the Riverside Hall. There is a need to recruit more people into groups in the parish, particularly those who would be prepared to take on a role in the group. There will be a maximum of 12 tables which groups can use to promote their activities. 6 tables are still available. It was agreed that Bampton Fair would have a table to try and recruit more volunteers.
A member of the public queried why the Emergency Plan was not on the website and Cllr L Bull explained that content is being migrated to a new Bampton Town Council website. People want to be able to look and find information. AS a result of storms in December some people lost their power for several days. The plan needs updating and Judi Thomas agreed to help Cllr L To do this. An item will be added to the agenda for the February meeting to give an update on the emergency plan.
Cllr Wilson, Morebath Parish Council, introduced himself as Morebath's Road Warden and he encouraged Bampton Town Council to get involved in Devon County Council's Road Warden Scheme. Z The scheme enables minor works to be carried out on or around the highway by trained volunteers. DCC will pay for training and materials. Morebath are repairing about 50 potholes in the parish per year. Cllr Chesterton's Locality Budget paid for some extra equipment. Cllr L Bull asked if Bampton Town Council would have to take the lead. There would be a Memorandum of Understanding between DCC and Bampton Town Council. Cllr Chesterton explained that more than one person could be trained.

Cllr Wilson left the meeting.

The applicant for planning application 24/01706/HOUSE, location 8 Newton Square, told the meeting the MDCC Conservation Officer had asked him to withdraw his original application to remove plans to put a window in the second floor (attic) where he was planning a bedroom. The room will not have a window now and the plans describe conversion of second (attic) floor to habitable room. When asked how the work on the property was going he said it was progressing slowly. s

- 4. To receive a report on the Christmas 2024 Event/Christmas trees and to discuss the possibility of forming a small committee to organise an event for 2025.** Cllr L Bull gave a huge thanks to all involved in organising the Christmas events from the Christmas trees to the activities organised using the Vibrant Town Centres funding and the food safari. All were well received.
There were some hiccups including the appalling weather on the Friday afternoon and evening of the main event. Fortunately there was a wet weather plan and many of the activities were moved to the Riverside Hall. The school had worked hard on practising their singing but sadly they couldn't sing as planned.
The Christmas trees rely on a small group of volunteers to put them up and take them down. The stalwarts who know what they are doing turned up this year, but it wasn't long after they had done a

tremendous amount of work organising and running Bampton Fair. Cllr Bull (L) doesn't want to do this on her own with Cllr White for Christmas 2025 and proposed setting up a Christmas Committee who take responsibility for the procurement of the Christmas trees, organising extra brackets for some of the houses that require them and agreeing the charge for the trees. An item will be added to the agenda to discuss setting up a formal committee of the Council which will have terms of reference. Members could be councillors and other interested members of the community. Cllr Bull and Cllr White are happy to be involved but want to make it safer and more future proof. Cllr Boyles expressed her interest in getting involved and leading on this.

A switch on has been organised previously and it was questioned whether something bigger and better could be organised.

Cllr White gave a big thank you to Cllr L Bull saying that without her driving it, it wouldn't happen. He also thanked everyone else involved with the Christmas trees including Wayne Boyles; Mark Webb; Adam Padgett; Cameron Grabke; Eddie Grabke; Mattie White; Nancy White and Trish White. Ed Tanner was thanked for allowing the Council to store the lights in his shed. As ever the Council is always grateful for his kind help.

- 5. Chairman's Report (for information only).** The Chair reported that he had attended a meeting of the Litter Pickers just before Christmas and the Council had paid for hot drinks and mince pies as a thank to them for keeping the town tidy.

A Police surgery will be held at the LARC on 8th January. This has been advertised.

Cllr Fouracre said he had received correspondence from Rachel Gilmour MP regarding an alleged rat problem in part of the town. He has spoken to a local pest controller who has said that problems with rats can be caused by people feeding birds in their gardens or not clearing up rubbish. MDCC no longer take any responsibility for pest control problems and he was not sure that it is Bampton Town Council's responsibility. Councillors felt education was the best solution. Dulverton Town Council have waste bins a slot underneath where rat bait gets put in. It was noted that the correspondence sent to Cllr Fouracre incorrectly had the Castle Grove Nursing Home address. There was a reminder that correspondence regarding Council business should be sent to the Clerk using the address 4A Newton Square, Bampton.

6. Reports

6.1. County Councillor. Just before Christmas the government announced a white paper on Local Government Reorganisation. It set out that councils would be mandated to move towards a model of Unitary Councils, additionally these councils would be grouped into Strategic Mayoral Authorities, each with an elected mayor. The Mayor will provide a key link between the Government and local Councils; and will have access to an additional level of funding compared to those areas that had not yet changed. change to unitary would mean that Devon's County and District Councils would cease to exist and the new authority would take on their responsibilities. Devon County Councillors will debate whether they are willing to work with the Government on 9th January. There will be a priority list for areas and any Council that doesn't want to work with the Government will go on the second list. The proposed Mayoral area is Cornwall, Plymouth, Devon and Torbay. There has been discussion at primary council level as the District Councils have a huge interest. DCC will make its own representations to Government. No other authority in Devon is asking for this. If a Council is on the priority list it will have Mayoral elections in May 2026. The Devon County Council elections might not place this year. If Devon wants to get their share of funding they need to work with the Government. The priority list will be released before the end of January. If it goes ahead there will be shadow elections next year and the District Councils will go in 2027. Unitary Councils have had variable success across the Country and Devon would need to learn from others. The White Paper mentions giving more power to Town and Parish Councils who will have opportunities to take over certain services and assets.

DCC's budget for 2025-26 is being finalised.

6.2. District Councillor. A written report from the District Councillors was circulated by email prior to the meeting. The report included the Joint Statement from the 8 Devon District Councils on devolution and local government reform.

The Mid Devon Homes project for new modular homes in School Close has started on the ground with demolition of the existing buildings.

The MDDC Community Risk Register will be discussed at Bampton Town Council's February meeting and a response agreed.

There was no further update on planning enforcement cases. There has been a visit from the planning officer but no other action.

Many were unhappy regarding the SWW road closure on the A396 between the Exeter Inn and the A361 which caused delays, uncertainty and risk. The closure seemed to cover more of the road than necessary and unnecessarily through night-time outside of the actual working periods. Direct contact resolved some of the issues in the end.

It was noted that Cllr Gilmour MP is double hatted ie a MP and a District Councillor. Cllr Adcock was asked if she intended to continue as a District Councillor. He said that she was considering retiring in the spring. Cllr Chesterton reminded everyone that applications to his Locality Budget will be closing in the spring.

He does not tend to award more than £1,000 to any project.

6.3. Speedwatch Group (Cllr Adcock). Information about speedwatch was included in Cllr Adcock's written report. Due to team members limited availability, only one event was held in December, on the 18th December at South Molton Road, Bampton. It was aborted after only 20 minutes due to heavy rain. Two speeding vehicles were reported. A new site at Shillingford has been approved. The team will plan more speed checks for January.

7. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd December 2024 as an accurate record of the meeting. The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

8. Charter Fair Report from Cllr White (Deferred from 2nd December meeting). Cllr White reported that the Charter Fair Committee had held a successful meeting prior to this one. The committee is now planning for 2025 and will be starting to get sponsorship.

9. Open Spaces Report:

9.1. Update on replacement of the lids on the 2 bins at the Millennium Green. The lids are being delivered tomorrow.

9.2. Update on securing the map of Bampton sign on the Stage. The Council's handyman is now back in action and will do this work as soon as possible.

9.3. Update on discussions about finger posts as signage within the town. There will be a maximum of 8 finger posts and they will be of a more traditional style than those in Tiverton. They are aimed at visitors but there is a limit to the amount of detail that can be included on each arm. The work is out to tender at present and the actual costs will then be known. Andy McDonald has applied for a grant. It was suggested that he apply through the Heritage Centre for funding from Cllr Chesterton's Locality Budget. It was agreed in principle that Bampton Town Council would give £1,000 towards the costs of the project.

9.4. Pruning of trees in the Community Orchard. A pruning day is being set up in late January. An expert will supervise.

9.5. Any other Open Spaces matters. Delays within MDDC's planning department are holding up the application to pollard the Sycamore tree.

Cllr L Bull reported that some of the branches on the trees in Station Road car park are knocking against the electricity lines when it is stormy resulting in a disruption to power to some properties. It was agreed that she would contact Four Seasons Tree Services and obtain a quote to trim the branches back.

Risks for the Station Road car park continue to be the same. Councillors noted that it is used heavily in the summer. In the past there have been discussions about putting it in with the hall but it was felt it should be a separate project. It was decided that a couple of quotes should be obtained to find out what the cost of upgrading the equipment would be. The Council has proved that it can turn projects around quickly. Sovereign and Red Dragon will be contacted. The project will need community involvement to there is a need as this will be required to support funding applications. Some funding has been in the 2025-26 draft budget.

10. Hall update from Cllr White (Deferred from 2nd December Meeting). A hall meeting will be held on 14th January at 6pm to look at the sketches provided by the architect and to decide a way forward. Cllr Fouracre will find out if the LARC is available. If it is not available he will organise another venue.

11. Riverside Hall Car Park: to consider how BTC could help to keep the Riverside Hall car park open to the public for the benefit of Bampton. The Riverside Hall Committee do not think there is anything that Bampton Town Council can do to help. People have started to contribute more financially. If the car park is used for uses other than people using the hall then business rates are charged on the car park by MDDC. Suggestions of how this could be avoided were made and will be shared with the committee.

12. Planning

12.1. Planning applications - Mid Devon District Council has asked for observations from the Town Council on the following planning application:

23/00696/Full Variation of Condition 2 of Planning Permission 17/01543/FULL - Erection of 2 prefabricated holiday units - to allow revised plans for the two units of holiday accommodation.

Location: Land at NGR 295379 121464 (New Park), Devon.

Comment: Recommend refusal. Bampton Town Council continue to object to the revision of plans. The original plan for two upmarket holiday lodges at a specific position on the site: instead, two static caravans have been erected lower down and nearer to a neighbour's boundary than shown on the plan. The Council does not believe this lower quality accommodation encourages tourism in the area. There is also concern that the caravans are not being used as holiday lets.

24/01706/House Reinstatement of 3 former window openings and installation of replacement windows to South elevation; conversion of second (attic) floor to habitable room. Location: 8 Newton Square, Bampton. Comment: no objections.

12.2. Planning Decisions: to note the following decisions made by MDDC

24/01681/CAT Notification of intention to remove 1 Apple and 1 Rowan Tree within the Conservation Area Location: Highfield Frog Street Bampton. Decision: no objection. Noted.

12.3. Any other planning matters. No other planning matters.

13. FINANCE:

13.1. Payments to be approved. It was resolved to approve the following payments:

Mrs J Larcombe interim clerking -	£720.00
Samantha Thomson (Christmas event expenses) -	£3,138.00
Cllr R White Bampton Fair expenses	£109.50
Architectural Services plans for the new community hall	£1140.00

13.2. Payments made since the last meeting. The following payments were noted.

Walkers are Welcome subscription -	£50.00
Emily Malpass (Christmas) -	£300.00
Stuart Barrie (Christmas) -	£1,750.00

3.0	Countrywide (Grounds maintenance) -	£637.820
	Janice Caunter (Toilet cleaning) -	£350.00
	Cllr S Fouracre (Expense claim) -	£142.35
	Viking (Supplies for toilets)	£73.12

13.3. Bank reconciliations. The reconciliation for October has been completed. The Clerk is working with the Chair regarding a small number of entries on the bank statements to ensure they are entered in the right budget code.

13.4. To agree the budget for 2025-26. A working party from the Finance Committee met on 2 occasions with the Interim Clerk/RFO to prepare a draft budget. This was followed by a Council party immediately prior to this meeting to scrutinise the draft budget. Amongst other cost of living increases the Open Spaces Miscellaneous Repairs budget was increased to cover leaf investigation. It was unanimously agreed approve the proposed budget which will increase the Band D contribution from £103.99 to £107.48, a 3% increase.

13.5. To agree the precept for 2025-26. It was resolved unanimously to request a precept of £85,000.

14. Clerks Report. The Clerk had nothing further to report.

15. Date of the next Council meeting. As the Clerk is unavoidably unable to attend a meeting on Monday 3rd February for family reasons it was agreed to hold the meeting on Tuesday 4th February 2025 at 7.00pm in the LARC building (subject to availability of the LARC building).

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Signed:
Chair

Date: