

WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

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The Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 25th July 2017 in the Committee Room, West Buckland Village Hall at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllrs Mrs M Blogg (Chair), D Lacey, Mrs C Hannath, D Mitton, J Nutt, C Rayson and C Silverlight.

In attendance: County Cllr J Thorne and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

38/07/17. To accept apologies for absence. There were no apologies.

39/07/17. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda. Cllr Lacey declared a personal interest in planning applications 46/17/0036 and 46/17/0038 because he has dealings with the applicant on a professional basis.

40/07/17. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 27/06/17. The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

41/07/17. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda. Cllr Mitton reported he had attended a Highways Agency A358 consultation event at Taunton on the 30th June and had discussed why the proposed route and direction had been chosen. The Ilminster to Honiton option would involve going through an AONB and it is Government policy not to do so if another option is available. The Government want a London /South West link and are not concerned with what SCC and TDBC want. TDBC would prefer another loop close to the park and ride but the Highways Agency said this was not their concern and if that is what TDBC want they will need to pay the additional cost as the cheapest option is the one they are putting forward. Cllr Mitton asked why the roundabout wasn't being put where the traffic lights are and it was explained this was due to the topography not being suitable in winter conditions.

42/07/17. Democratic Period. There were no members of the public at the meeting.

43/07/17. Planning:

a) To consider any Planning Applications received by the Parish Council prior to the meeting.

46/17/0033 Erection of porch to south elevation at 11 Dyers Close, West Buckland.
Applicants: Mr & Mrs J Andrews. Comment: West Buckland Parish Council has no objections to the granting of approval.

46/17/0034 Demolition of outbuildings and erection of replacement public house with detached store at Merry Harriers, Forches Corner, Clayhidon. Applicant: Mr R Payne.
Comment: West Buckland Parish Council supports the granting of approval.

46/17/0036 Erection of a two storey extension to the side and a single storey extension to the front of Chelston Motorhomes, Chelston Business Park, Wellington. Applicant: Chelston Motorhomes.

Comment: West Buckland Parish Council has no objections to the granting of approval. Cllr Lacey declared a personal interest.

46/17/0038 Erection of industrial unit for Class B1 use on land to the rear of The Gate House, Chelston. Applicant: Chelston Motorhomes.

Comment: West Buckland Parish Council supports the third comment made by Mr D J Smith, on behalf of Trustees of Chelston Chapel, that the applicant, when considering water courses, has overlooked a ditch with running water that runs along the boundary of the Chapel and the new development. The Parish Council ask that it is checked whether use of soakaways to dispose of rainwater will rely on this feature and may result in an excess of water collecting upstream and causing flooding. The Parish Council is also concerned about highway safety and access from the A38 and note that a condition of approval for planning application 46/12/0007 for development at Blackdown Garden Centre was the provision of a right hand turn lane.

Cllr Lacey declared a personal interest.

46/17/0035 Erection of a single storey 3 bedroomed holiday let at Wellclose Farm, Blackmoor, Wellington. Applicant: Mr G Roberts.

Comment: West Buckland Parish Council has no objections to the granting of approval.

b) To receive decisions from planning applications determined by TDBC.

46/17/0021 Formation of secure vehicle storage compound on land adjacent to Taunton Vale House, Summerfield Way, Chelston Business Park, Wellington.

Decision: conditional approval granted.

46/17/0027 Erection of a workshop/garage/office building with separate secure storage building on Compound 5, Foxmoor Business Park, Wellington.

Decision: conditional approval granted.

c) Update on planning enforcement matters reported to TDBC. There was no update.

d) Any other planning matters. Between the June and July meetings the Parish Council was consulted on a Certificate of Lawfulness application submitted by Mrs C Smith claiming there has been a change of use of a shed and piece of land at Buckland Farm for use for dog training for more than 10 years.. As the change of use has been happening for 10 years or more it means enforcement action may not be taken for breach of planning law. The Parish Council were not able to provide any evidence that the dog training had not been taking place for ten years..

44/07/17. Highways.

a) Matters arising from previous meeting/s. The signs for the smokery, that were believed to have been put up without permission, were reported to highways and the one at Worlds End has been removed. It was not known whether the signs at Vokers Cross and Hockholler Lane have also been removed. The signs advertising businesses in Foxmoor Business Park and Blackdown Garden Centre that have appeared on the adjacent verges were also reported to highways and they have said they will have a look. Signs have also been appearing in trailers in the laybys close to the Junction 27 roundabout

b) To note any highway defects to report to SCC. No defects reported.

c) Programme of work for lengthsman. Cllr Mitton and Cllr Nutt reported they had been out twice preparing a draft programme of work for the lengthsman. They will be going out again next week and will present a report to the next meeting. It is not easy to spot culverts that need cleaning when travelling by car and parishioners will be asked to tell the Parish Council if they know of any that need cleaning for safety purposes. Business owners are responsible for cleaning their signs but if they are on the highways this should be done by someone with Chapter 8 training. Cllr Silverlight questioned whether the Parish Council should be paying for highways work. .

d) Report from Fingerpost Signs Training Event and discussion on the next steps for signs in the parish. Cllr Silverlight gave a verbal report. A written report provided following the meeting is included as Appendix B.

e) Any other highways matters. The Clerk will contact TDBC to ask for the dykes at Lee Park to be cleared.

A parishioner who lives at Crown Hill has complained to the Parish Council and Cllr Thorne that HGV vehicles are using Sawyers Hill and Crown Hill despite being prohibited from doing so. Unfortunately only Cllr Silverlight had received the email intended for the Parish Council and he agreed to forward the email after the meeting. It was recognised that this is difficult matter to enforce.

Cllr Lacey has cut the vegetation around the village signs at Silver Street and Sawyers Hill.

45/07/17. To receive reports from:

a) County Cllr. Report given under item 48/07/17.

b) Police. The Police Report for June was circulated by email in early July. There were 27 logs for the beat for the month. The Speedwatch team have been carrying out checks in the village but need a third person to help them carry out the checks more efficiently. This will be publicised in the newsletter, on the notice board and on the website.

c) Village Hall Committee. Cllr Mrs Hannath had circulated a report by email prior to the meeting. The annual electrical testing was carried out on 22nd July. The external painting of Village Hall has been completed and the cost of the labour provided by Community Payback was £30 + VAT. The secretary has been checking to see whether the Village Hall should be registered with the Information Commissioner. Angela Wills is to retire as Pre-School Manager following a back operation.

d) Any Other Reports. There were no other reports.

46/07/17. Finance

a) To agree and authorise payments

It was resolved to make the following payments:

Mrs J Larcombe – £239.03 Clerk's salary and expenses (Chq no 1371)

Playsafety Ltd – £100.80 annual play area inspection (Chq no 1372)

b) To review spending against budget for the period 1st April to 30th June 2017.

The report (Appendix A) was noted. No invoices have been received yet this financial year for grass cutting and strimming.

c) Review of the effectiveness of the internal audit

It was noted that internal audit is about processes. The review document was agreed and signed by the Chairman.

47/07/17. Playing Field

a) Any matters to report from inspections carried out during the previous month any actions taken or to be taken as a result. There were no matters to report.

- b) Request from Cave Veterinary Specialists to use the playing field to play rounders as a team building exercise.** Permission was given and it will be explained that the car park belongs to the Village Hall and if there is a booking in the hall there might not be any parking. If toilets are needed they will need to be booked.
- c) To discuss the annual inspection report and agree any recommended work.** The report was discussed. Tasks include replacing a missing nut and a nut and bolt on the metal fence and replacing a cap on the horse rocker. The surface around the goal posts was reported to be wearing. The holes in the goal nets were not noted on the report. It was felt the overall risk rating of medium was unduly harsh when most of the equipment was judged to be low or very low risk. Ancillary items were all individually judged to be between 2 and 4 but the overall risk score was 7, the high end of the low scale. In future spare nuts and bolts will be kept. Before the next inspection is due the Council will consider asking another provider to carry out the inspection.
- d) Any other matters to note.** Brambles are growing through the metal fencing at the far end of the play area. Mr Stanworth will be asked to cut them back.

Cllr Thorne joined the meeting at this point.

48/07/17. County Cllr Report. Cllr Thorne referred to the email from the parishioner at Crown Hill regarding HGV's using Sawyers Hill and noted the number of businesses on the edge of the parish. This issue will be monitored. He asked whether any white lines in the parish needed to be repainted and was informed the Parish Council had been told in August 2016 the road markings near to the school would be repainted but this hasn't been done. SCC is planning to market its Registration Service for weddings etc. Cllr Thorne has met with representatives from Gigaclear who are involved in rolling out superfast broadband in the Blackdown Hills and he reported they would soon be announcing their roll out figures. If road closures are needed for this work the road concerned will only be closed while work is being carried out. He is now a member of the SCC Audit Committee.

49/07/17. Footpaths:

a) To discuss emails about ongoing issue on Footpath WG14/1. The Parish Council has received an email from Cllr Roger Habgood, Executive Member & Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy and Transportation TDBC, concerning the long running closure of Footpath WG14/1 due to an unsafe bridge at OS Grid: ST167229. Cllr Habgood has contacted Peter Hobley, Rights of Way Service Manager SCC, to try and resolve the issue, which has been going on for nine years. Mr Hobley has explained to Cllr Habgood, by email, that the Rights of Way Department is awaiting more information on the Taunton Strategic Flood Scheme. It is clear from the plans that if a scheme at Bradford-on-Tone goes ahead it would impact on the rights of way network. Rights of Way has advised that a diversion under the appropriate legislation would be necessary due to the likelihood of longer periods of flooding and a change in ground conditions as a result. For this reason it would not be prudent to pursue the replacement of the current bridge and the necessary diversion to the northwest of the bridge until there is a clear understanding of whether the flood scheme will be within the town, at Bradford-on-Tone or a combination of both. The capital allocation for such projects as the replacement of the bridge is not limitless and decisions in terms of its expenditure have to be taken in consideration of a long term investment; ie: longer than 4 or 5 years. As soon as there is a clear understanding of the preferred option Rights of Way will look at a project to progress the re-opening of this path, whether that be on its current alignment or a revised alignment. Unfortunately the specialists appointed to carry out an in depth survey are not as far ahead with the modelling as hoped so are not in a position to give us any firm timescales. However, they

indicated that some of the modelling may be completed within the next 6 months which would enable them to provide some of the data to SCC which may result in a preferred option decision. In the meantime the option is available to the Parish Councils concerned (Bradford-on-Tone, Nynehead and West Buckland) to pursue their own negotiations with the landowner to secure a replacement structure, albeit SCC would need to be satisfied on certain matters if the temporary closure was to be lifted following any works. In this scenario they could only make a very token contribution which Mr Hobley expects would price the project beyond the means of the Parish Councils, unless of course the landowner was to fund the majority cost. Councillors agreed to wait for the flood relief modelling before pursuing the replacement of the bridge and the reopening of the footpath.

b) Any matters brought forward. It was reported that Footpath 14/39 is overgrown around the stile near Melcombe. Cllr Silverlight will clear the area.

Cllr Thorne left the meeting.

50/07/17. Update on providing a night landing site for the Air Ambulance. Cllr Mitton reported Parish Council's interest in providing a night landing site has been registered with the Air Ambulance Service and they will investigate its suitability.

51/07/17. Hosting of a NHS Health Check. A date will be arranged for late September or October.

52/07/17. Correspondence and items of interest. The following correspondence was noted:
Community Council for Somerset - information on the Village Agent Scheme.

53/07/17. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion. There was no urgent business.

54/07/17. Date of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 29th August at 7.30pm.

Appendix A: West Buckland Parish Council Internal Audit Review

The Council is required to annually review the adequacy and effectiveness of internal audit as part of the process of review of internal control.

The Council employ Ken Abraham to carry out the role of independent internal auditor for the council. This arrangement is covered by a contract between the Parish Council and Mr Abraham. The contractual arrangement helps to ensure that the independent auditor is free to speak his mind without any short term pressures being possible from the Council in terms of severance of his contract. The auditor adheres to CIPFA guidelines on the role of the internal audit.

Fraud and corruption are the responsibility of the Council though where system weaknesses are found fraud aspects are considered by the independent internal auditor.

The independent internal auditor has the same rights of access to members, personnel and records as the external auditor.

There is no evidence that internal audit work has not been carried out ethically, with integrity and objectivity.

The internal audit programme routinely covers sufficient testing to enable completion of part 4 of the annual return, additional focus is on budgetary control and estimates and the year end accounts preparation. Additionally key governance policies and procedures are monitored and reviewed.

The independent internal auditor has a portfolio of councils and therefore is able to review services in comparison with other councils and therefore share best practice.

The combination of cumulative knowledge and experience of the Council and other similar Councils means that risk assessment is highly tuned.

The independent internal auditor encourages the Council to be proactive in developing its services and to be open to change. The independent internal auditor has provided support to officers and members in progressing this transaction.

The Council is confident that no member or officer of the Council is related to the independent internal auditor or has any connection with his business. It is the duty of every member and officer to bring any changes to this statement to the attention of the Council as soon as they become aware of such connections.

West Buckland Parish Council regularly reviews the internal control of the council and makes such recommendations and instructions as are necessary. Such recommendations or instructions are recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

This document was agreed by West Buckland Parish Council on the 25th July 2017.

Appendix B: Report on Fingerpost Workshop

Background

Since the decision (in 2015?) by Somerset County Council to withdraw funding for maintaining traditional Finger Post road signs, their condition has deteriorated. Volunteers who wish to work on the posts must undertake basic mandatory training

Somerset County Council is co-ordinating a project aimed at surveying and refurbishing all historic finger post signs within the county. This involves carrying out a condition survey on each individual finger post; identifying the work required to restore it; and, where practically possible, carrying out those restoration works.

The survey and refurbishment work involved will be carried out in each parish area by local volunteers. Somerset County Council is providing training workshops to assist these volunteers so that surveys and refurbishment works can be carried out competently and safely. Only volunteers who have successfully completed a training workshop will be allowed to carry out survey and refurbishment works on finger post signs. Work involving major refurbishment and/or in a dangerous location will be carried out by suitably qualified and approved contractors' only

Arranged by Traffic and Transport Development, SCC.

Cost – travel expenses (Nil for the workshop)

Date – 18 July 2017

Venue – Village Hall, Ruishton

Duration – Half day training session

Attendees – Councillors John Nutt and Charles Silverlight

Number of delegates – 35 approx.

Aim of the training

The training was aimed at giving volunteers the knowledge and skills to do simple maintenance and restoration of Finger Posts (cleaning, painting, simple damage repair).

Introduction

Jo Sharpe, Traffic and Transport Development, SCC outlined the current situation. There is no money available for FP maintenance therefore SCC have set up an initiative to allow volunteers to restore and preserve Finger Posts which are considered a historical and iconic part of the Somerset landscape.

SCC have created a webpage <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/schemes-and-initiatives/somerset-fingerpost-restoration-project/>

which includes a link to the *Somerset Traditional Fingerposts Maintenance, Repair and Restoration Handbook* <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?aId=124195>

History

Nic Wall gave a presentation on the history of Somerset's Finger Posts. This appeared similar to that which he gave at the Blackdown Hills AONB's Community Heritage Forum:

Restoration of Somerset's traditional finger posts - <http://bit.ly/BlackdownsFingerposts>

Health & Safety

Stuart Haddinott of Civil Skills Plus gave a very comprehensive presentation on H&S; legal aspects, risks involved (manual handling, hazardous substances, working near the highway, working at height, slips and falls, bugs and animals (e.g. ticks. Snakes), vegetation), risk assessments. Hardcopy of Stuart's presentation is available.

Way Forward

Dave Brabham Traffic and Transport Development, SCC explained how the project would proceed and how volunteers might get involved. As a first step, all the FPs need to be surveyed using a Smart Phone 'App' that records the details (location, condition etc). Only 10 'App' licenses are available, volunteers can request these from SCC.

Actual work on the FPs will depend on the nature of the FPs defects – and it's proximity to the highway. If it is within 1.52m of the highway, work can only be undertaken by, or under the supervision, of a suitably qualified individual.

Before any work can proceed, application (completion of the correct forms) will have to be made to SCC and a Risk Assessment carried out.

Although some work might be done by volunteers (cleaning, painting, vegetation clearance), more complex tasks (uprighting of FPs, removal and repair of fingers) can only be undertaken by suitably qualified contractors. [John to add bit about Chard Foundry].

Although we have yet to do the 'App' survey of West Buckland's FPs, I think it will become apparent that most of the FPs are too close to the highway for unassisted volunteer working.

Conclusions

A useful and necessary half day's training if we are to maintain our Finger Posts. My perception was that many of the attendees were surprised by the complexity and level of bureaucracy involved. Some found it hard to grasp that there simply isn't any SCC funding available to assist in FP maintenance. But it also seemed apparent that SCC still value the FPs and are trying to assist as much as possible (without spending any money).