

WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

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The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 30th April 2019 in the Committee Room, West Buckland Village Hall at 7.45pm.

Present: Cllr's Mrs M Blogg (Chair), D Lacey, D Mitton, J Nutt, C Rayson and C Silverlight.

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

182/04/19. To accept apologies for absence. Apologies were accepted from Cllr Mrs Hannath.

183/04/19. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda. There were no disclosures.

184/04/19. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 26/03/19. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chair.

185/04/19. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda. Referring to item 179/03/19 Cllr Mitton reported that he had spoken to a member of the local Royal British Legion (RBL) who had confirmed that the RBL would be happy to receive a donation without providing a new Remembrance Wreath. The Parish Council will use the same one as in 2018 because it is in a good enough condition to be used again. A number of churches apparently already reuse their wreaths. There are two war graves in West Buckland Churchyard and the local RBL has had a preliminary discussion with the primary school about them recognising the war graves. They have suggested that West Buckland school does the same as Rockwell Green School where the children periodically put flowers on the graves. The flowers are paid for by Wellington Town Council. The RBL will be speaking to the school again in June and will suggest they speak to this Council about paying for flowers.

186/04/19. To note result of uncontested election. Five nominations were received for seven seats which resulted in an uncontested election. Margaret Blogg, David Lacey, David Mitton, John Nutt and Charles Silverlight all submitted nomination forms and were elected without the need for an election. The two vacancies will be advertised and it is hoped to co-opt two people to fill the vacancies at the next meeting.

187/04/19. County Councillor's Report. It was agreed to bring this item forward. Cllr Thorne answered questions about his report which had been circulated by email earlier in the day. Report attached as Appendix A.
Cllr Mrs Blogg referred to the speed limit reduction on the A38, which the Parish Council, supports, and asked Cllr Thorne his reasons for continuing to object to it. She noted that there is a 40 mph speed limit on the A38 at Pyles Thorne. Cllr Thorne said this was going

to be reduced to 30 mph. He felt that the 50 to 40 mph speed limit reduction on the A38 would mean there would be no further safety improvements as SCC would now consider the road safe. A speed check carried out by SCC showed that vehicles were travelling at 40 mph on average, which is less than the speed limit anyway. He feels it is a 50 mph road and questions why this should be reduced, particularly at night, noting that most accidents have happened between Sheppy's and the Black Bird public house. The speed limit on the Toneway has been reduced from 50 mph to 40 mph and it has not reduced congestion. He felt it would only reduce the speed of traffic approaching the Silver Street junction by seconds and that would not be worth much. Councillors disagreed with him and felt every second counted, particularly as the amount of traffic using this section of the A38 is increasing as Wellington grows. Cllr Mrs Blogg responded that the Parish Council has been trying to get improvements at this junction for all the years she has been on the Council. People moving into the village ask what can be done.

Cllr Thorne said there would be no more cuts to frontline services in the next two years as the financial situation has improved. The Head of Finance has changed twice and they have been much tighter on spending. Managers have been set spending limits and anything above that amount has to be agreed by senior managers. Savings have to be deliverable. Cllr Mitton commented that the Change Team are finally doing what they should be doing.

There have been twelve incursions by travellers on a Park and Ride site and this has cost SCC £74,000. Work is being carried out at County Hall, amid some controversy, and meetings cannot be held there until the Autumn. Cllr Thorne referred to SCC's in house bus fleet and said groups could use their minibuses as long as they do not compete with commercial services. It was queried whether free bus passes could be used on this type of service and it was noted that the slinky bus charges bus pass holders half fare. It was suggested that parish councils could get together to provide a bus service. Cllr Mitton referred to Public Health Nurses, who are being transferred to SCC, and asked whether SCC used to pay the NHS before they were transferred over. Staff found out late in the day that they would be transferred over and were upset. There is no additional cost.

188/04/19. Democratic Period. No members of the public present.

189/04/19. Planning:

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

46/19/0009 Erection of single storey extension to rear of Gammon Barn, Ham, Wellington.

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

46/19/0010 Erection of single storey extension to rear of 32 Dyers Close, West Buckland.

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

46/19/0013 Erection of single storey extensions to rear and side of 4 Peacock Cottages, West Buckland.

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

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

46/18/0032 Erection of an occupational workers dwelling at Alexandra Dunn racing, Cordings Farm, West Buckland Road, West Buckland (amended scheme to 46/17/0051).
Decision: conditional approval granted.

46/19/0001 Erection of extension to farm building with erection of additional agricultural building and 2 polytunnels and formation of access track at Catsbear Farm, Ruggin Road, West Buckland. Decision: conditional approval granted

b) Update on progress with a decision for application 46/17/0053 Removal of Condition No 03 of 46/16/0005 (Restrictions to trading of retail building) at Blackdown Garden Centre, Wellington Road, West Buckland. No further documents have been added to information on the planning authority's website since October. The Clerk will follow this up with the Enforcement Officer or the Planning Officer dealing with the application.

c) Any other planning matters. The Clerk was asked to find out about Enforcement Officer progress with E/0010/46/16 at Gerbestone Manor Farm.

190/04/19. Highways.

a) Matters arising from previous meeting/s. Gwyn Hughes, a new Assistant Highways Service Manager, has emailed Cllr Mrs Blogg regarding the proposed Junction 26 roundabout kerbing repairs. Cllr Thorne has also emailed the Clerk with the same information. Mr Hughes explained that the kerbs sit on the top of the concrete slabs forming the carriageway. Highways are currently seeking solutions to produce a robust, deliverable solution that is cost effective. The sheer size of the scheme is proving very expensive so they want to ensure any works carried out will be a permanent solution. The proposed repairs were going to cost a substantial amount and they saw little point in carrying out the same sort of repair as had been previously used, only for the repairs to fail in a relatively short time. The kerbs will be collected to allow the grass to be cut but warning cones will be left in place. He apologised for the delay in carrying out this repair. It was queried whether the dumpy bags, containing gritting material, on Buckland Hill would be collected this year as the ones from the previous winter are still there.

The Clerk has been informed by email regarding the ongoing road closure at School Lane (also known as France Lane). Despite signs advising the lane is unsuitable for HGV's they have been using it to make deliveries to Wee Tree Nursery. This has resulted in most of the verge and ditch along a stretch of the lane disappearing and causing a deep open ditch which has filled up with water, right to the edge of the road surface. At the beginning of April an emergency road closure was put in place by Wessex Water to repair a broken access cover in the highway outside of the school and it appears a visitor to the area misread the diversion signs and drove down the lane and ended up in the ditch. An emergency road closure was put in place to prevent any further incidents. This type of road closure does not require any notice. It is planned to carry out drainage clearance works and then reform a verge to give a positive edge to the carriageway with reflective signs mounted on the new verge. Additional warning signage for HGV's will be added. To improve drainage of the lane some edge of carriageway hatching will be carried out at the Wee Tree end. Works are expected to commence from June 2019.

Taunton Model Engineers have applied to the planning authority to discharge the conditions in their permission and hope to hear back within a few weeks. They are about to complete on purchasing the land and work will begin on site as soon as this occurs, hopefully within a few days. From then on it is a question of how quickly they can mobilise their volunteers. There have been several offers of help from the village and they are looking forward to new faces helping them. They intend to put out a regular newsletter on the progress on site and will be given a page on the village website to publicise the project.

b) To note any highway defects to report to SCC. None noted.

c) Update on funding a litter bin using Community Infrastructure Levy.

The Clerk confirmed that a litter bin could be purchased using money received from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) as this met the criteria. It was agreed to pay for the bin on the B3158 in West Buckland parish, as put forward by Wellington Town Council

and discussed at the February and March meetings, from the CIL reserves held. A cheque (no 1439) for £378.00 (£350 + VAT) payable to Wellington Town Council was signed. The clerk will find out whether CIL money can be used for the refurbishment of fingerpost signs.

d) Any other highways matters. An email was received from Highways claiming that the bus shelter on the A38 close to the World's End had some damage. On inspection it was discovered that it was actually the bus shelter on the opposite side of the road that was damaged and this belongs to Bradford-on-Tone Parish Council.

Cllr Silverlight has obtained prices for the paint to refurbish the fingerpost signs. It was agreed he would purchase paint brushes and both black and white Hammerite paint at £49.99 per 2.5L tin and grey Hammerite paint at £19.90 per 750 ml tin.

191/04/19. To receive reports from:

a) County Cllr. This was dealt with under item 187/04/19.

b) Police. An email report for March was circulated in early April.

c) Village Hall. Cllr Mrs Blogg reported on the Village Hall Committee meeting held on 3rd April. The Secretary went through the required elements of Hallmark 1, which is due for renewal this year, and the Committee is fully prepared the inspection which will take place when the Hall is available during July/August. NatWest continues to have problems with making changes to the account which they say is due to an error when the 'Trust' was ticked as a 'Society' on an on-line form completed by the bank. This is making things difficult for the new Treasurer who has no access to the account details.

As the notice board on the exterior wall is no longer fit for purpose, it was decided to get a quote for a man-made timber replacement from Greenbarnes Ltd. This has been received but some members were concerned with the cost and were interested in a slim line metal board. A committee member is getting prices for this before a decision is made.

The Chairman felt that with a few new members on the Committee, it would be helpful to make everyone aware of the voluntary work needed for smooth running of the Hall.

Several members agreed to take on jobs and were thanked for their help.

The next meeting will follow the AGM on 1st May 2019.

Cllr Mrs Blogg will give a report for the AGM and May meeting. The Parish Council will need to appoint a new representative for the Village Hall Committee at the Annual Meeting on 20th May.

d) Any Other Reports. Cllr Mitton spoke about the problems that he, and others, have experienced trying to contact Somerset West & Taunton Council. SALC will be inviting Mr Hassett, CEO, to attend a West Area meeting and Cllr Mitton expects this issue to be raised with him. The new council was expecting the majority of enquiries to be handled via their website but the website does not appear, as yet, to be capable of dealing with slightly out of the ordinary queries. People's jobs have changed within the new council and it is difficult to know who is dealing with what.

192/04/19. Finance:

a) To agree and authorise any payments.

Mrs J Larcombe - £318.75 Clerk's salary and expenses (Chq no 1440)

b) To note new Community Infrastructure Levy receipt. The Council has received £2080.65, the Meaningful Proportion of CIL collected between 01.10.18 and 31.03.19 by TDBC from planning application 46/17/0013 – Rear of 1 Peacocks Cottages, Silver Street, West Buckland (paid in full).

c) To agree signatories for new bank account. It was agreed that the signatories for the new bank account will be Cllr's Mrs M Blogg, D Lacey and C Silverlight.

193/04/19. 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. It was reported that the DLO has only cut the playing field once since the start of March when the contract started and it was not up to last year's standard. The field was badly cut, a wide sweep of uncut grass was left around the tree, no strimming was carried out and the play area still hasn't been cut. The Clerk had difficulty in contacting the DLO to find out why the grass hadn't been cut because WS & T Council Customer Service will not put through phone calls. Instead a case has to be raised with the person you are trying to contact and you have to wait for them to contact you. An email sent to the Clerk to acknowledge that the case had been raised said an answer would be received within 10 working days. An email sent to the DLO previously had not been answered. The Clerk said she felt this was unacceptable as there is a need to be able to contact people you have a contract with to provide a service. The DLO has been having staffing issues as a number of members of staff appear to have left during the restructure. The gate to the playing field was lifted off its hinges as the key to the field, given to the DLO last year, appears to have been lost. The gate was rehung and members of the public replaced it on its hinges a few days later. The Clerk felt this was a health and safety issue. An informal complaint has been made and it is hoped the situation will improve. The Quality of the grass cutting will continue to be monitored.

b) Difficulty in contacting the DLO by telephone following start of Somerset West and Taunton Council. This item was covered under a).

c) To agree who will carry out the annual inspection of the play area for 2019. It was agreed to ask Wicksteed Leisure to inspect the playing field twice a year. Cllr Nutt will check the equipment every week. Cllr Silverlight will empty the litter bin in the play area and walk around the field.

194/04/19. Footpaths: any footpath matters brought forward. There were no matters brought forward.

195/04/19. Correspondence and items of interest. There was no further correspondence.

196/04/19. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion. There was no urgent business.

1197/04/19. Date of the next meeting. The next meeting, the Annual Meeting, will be held on Monday 20th May 2019. In an election year the Annual Meeting has to be held within 15 days of councillors taking office, which this year was the 7th May. This has meant the meeting could not be held on the last Tuesday in May.

Appendix A

- **Finances** – At long last, there is some good news to report on the financial front. SCC has weathered the storm and is now in a much better position than this time last year, or even six months ago. So much so, that it has gone from looking at overspending in the year ending 31 March and having to make £19 million of savings, to actually underspending by around £2.5 million, allowing it to reverse many of the savings plans which had been agreed, plus having an additional £3.75 million to spend on services this year. Progress has been down to a number of factors, including delivering on its savings plans (where previously many approved savings were not actually being achieved), better managing of budgets to reduce the risk of overspends, and (a bit technical but hugely, hugely important, rebuilding our general reserves fund. There will be no more cuts to frontline services over the next two years.
- **Broadband vouchers** – Connecting Devon and Somerset is now offering vouchers through the national BDUK Better Broadband Scheme. All homes and businesses in the county with broadband speeds of less than two megabits per second (2Mbps) and without a published delivery date for superfast broadband within the next 12 months, are now eligible to apply for an interim solution under the voucher scheme. Vouchers worth up to £350 would contribute towards the cost of equipment and installation of a 4G, Fixed Wireless, or Satellite solution. Applications need to be made through registered suppliers on the approved supplier list at <https://basicbroadbandchecker.culture.gov.uk>.
- **A38/Silver Street junction** – SCC has approved the reduction in speed limits on the A38 from 50 mph to 40 mph and will shortly be advertising the change.
- **Park and Ride** – You may be aware that the P&R site at Henlade recently suffered another incursion by travellers. It happened late on a Friday and the was therefore closed until the Tuesday. County were able to speed up the legal process based on their previous experiences and issued a notice of eviction early on the Monday morning instead of taking a week to do so. The travellers then left within a few hours. The site then had to be cleaned up again ready to be reopened on the Tuesday morning. I have asked the obvious questions as to how this can keep happening and what can/should be done to stop it.
- **A Block** – Work on the refurbishment of County Hall’s A Block is progressing well and the 30-year-old boiler has been replaced. It is still going to be the autumn before we can start using it again and meetings can be held there instead of the Taunton Library Reading Room. This is an invest to save scheme which will save £700k a year by allowing the council to close other buildings and bring staff into County Hall.
- **Public Health Nurses** – More than 200 public health nurses transferred from Somerset Partnership NHS Trust to the County Council on 1st April. They include Health Visitors, School Nurses, Assistant Practitioners and Administrative Support. They will continue to work with local communities and families in different settings such as homes, children’s centres, GP surgeries, schools, and Early Year settings delivering the healthy child programme which offers support to all families in pregnancy up to 19-years-old to give children the best start in life.
- **In-House Bus Fleet** - County currently has 68 minibuses operating from seven sites around Somerset, including Taunton. These vehicles are allowed to carry a maximum of 16 passengers. Work is now underway to look at replacing some of the vehicles with full size 53-seat buses or coaches. A review of transport routes and a costing exercise on the in-house option has demonstrated viability. This would not only deliver resilience and cost savings but also introduce competition into the market, which has lost so many local operators over recent times. This may present opportunities to explore ‘Section 22’ services where these vehicles are used to provide bus services for local communities where they are not in competition with a commercial operator.