WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman – Mrs M K Blogg
4 Peacocks Close
West Buckland
TA21 9JY
Tel 01823 663378
email margaretblogg@btinternet.com

Clerk – Mrs J Larcombe
6 The Old School
Chapel Street
Tiverton
EX16 6ND
Tel 01884 252647
email westbucklandclerk@gmail.com

www.westbuckland.org

The Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 28th January 2020 in the Committee Room, West Buckland Village Hall at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllr's Mrs M Blogg (Chair), D Lacey, Mrs S Drury, D Mitton, J Nutt and C Silverlight.
In attendance: County Cllr J Thorne and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

129/01/20. To accept apologies for absence. Apologies were accepted from Cllr Mrs Peace due to work and personal matters. She has warned the Council she may not be able to attend for a few months for the same reasons and offered to resign. It was decided that it would be better for her to take time to make the decision and if she decides to do so it would be better if she resigned in April or May when Cllr Mrs Blogg plans to retire.
Apologies were received from District Cllr R Habgood.

130/01/20. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda. There were no disclosures.

131/01/20. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 07/01/20. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and they were duly signed by the Chair.

132/01/20. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda. There were no matters arising.

133/01/20. Democratic Period. There were no members of the public present.

134/01/20. Planning:

a) To consider any Planning Applications received by the Parish Council prior to the meeting. No planning applications received.

b) To receive decisions from planning applications determined by SWT Council.

46/19/0030 Conversion of part of outbuilding from stables/open storage to annexe accommodation for family use at Salters Barn, Gerbestone Road, West Buckland
Decision: conditional approval granted.

46/19/0033 Erection of a single storey extension for additional service bay at South Street Accident Repair Centre Ltd, Summerfield Way, Chelston Business Park, Wellington.
Decision: conditional approval granted.

46/19/0036/LEW Application for a Certificate of Lawful Development for the existing lawful implementation of application 46/13/0007 with the erection of a plant store under that consent at Gerbestone Manor Farm, Gerbestone Road, West Buckland.
Decision: approval granted.

c) To note 46/19/0034 will be decided by the SWT Planning Committee on 30th January. It was noted that the Planning Officer is recommending approval for this application. Anyone who wishes to speak at the hearing had to inform the Committee Clerk by 5pm today, 28th January. Objectors to the application do not get sent the officer's report for the Planning Committee meeting and have to look online for it. The Parish Council is disappointed that the planning officer is recommending approval and remains opposed to the granting of approval.

d) SWT Issues & Options Consultation. Cllr Mitton and Cllr Nutt will both be attending one of the consultation events and will put together some thoughts for the next meeting.

e) Any other planning matters. A gym has opened at Morrishes Farm and no Change of Use application has been received. It was reported that people using the gym are parking in Lee Park and close to the school and this is upsetting people in this area. The Clerk has reported the alleged contravention to Planning Enforcement.

Concern was expressed that a number of JCB's are parked in a field at the front of Foxmoor Business Park but it is understood that these will be sold at auction during the second half of February.

135/01/20. Highways.

a) Matters arising from previous meeting/s. The Community Payback scheme has been used to clear the footpath and gutters on the A38. Work started in Wellington and is going towards Taunton.

Missing kerbing around the roundabout at M5 Junction 26 needs to be added to the agenda for March. It was suggested that the kerbing might be repaired if the House of Somerset project goes ahead.

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

c) To discuss the Parish Council becoming involved in verge protection. SCC has confirmed the placing out of stones on verges owned by SCC could be regarded as an obstruction. Such items placed out on the Highway are regarded as obstructions, regardless of the compelling reasons for doing so. Section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 states "if a person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way wilfully obstructs the free passage along a highway he is guilty of an offence". Consequently they cannot condone this action. Ultimately, any vehicle damaged or persons injured using the highway as a consequence of these stones, could have a valid claim for compensation against the person responsible for placing them out in the Civil Courts. SCC, being the Highways Authority, tend not to take action unless there is a specific complaint or obvious danger to the travelling public. There are numerous examples of this on their network and it would be very difficult and time consuming to enforce, hence their current position. Just because they take no action, this is not an indication of their permission, implied or not, to place out such items. The only other consideration is the placing out of a type of bollard. SCC term them as verge master bollards and use then to point out the edge of the carriageway to highway users. They are made from plastic, so are relatively safe (passive), and they are reflective and their use on the edge of a highway verge is acceptable. In the scenario of erecting these bollards in place of stones, this type of highway improvement is not safety related so SCC would not agree to their installation on the highway at their expense. They would therefore be looking at the Parish Council to pay for this type of works. Also a bollard is regarded as an obstruction, so the Parish Council would have to seek permission to place this type of obstruction out on the highway and each application would have to be considered on its own merits, they would not give a blanket approval. There are other considerations as well, such as the Parish Council having to sign an

indemnity agreement with SCC, to agree to pay for any subsequent repair / maintenance costs for these bollards in perpetuity. Lastly, erection of bollards on the Highway in Somerset, is administered by the Traffic Management Team, so ultimately they would have to agree. SCC would not consider selling any part of land forming part of the Highway, as it is a national asset and as such cannot be sold off.
At the last meeting a parishioner asked the Parish Council to find out about becoming involved in verge protection work. Cllr Silverlight again declared a personal interest as a neighbour. The Parish Council felt that they had been contacted about one particular area but the request could lead to other areas in the parish wanting the same. This would result in long term expenditure and liabilities and the Council cannot calculate how much this would cost as there are many such verges in the parish. Parishioners will be made aware of the issue of boulders on verges and the advice highways have given.
d) To note Chapter 8 qualification for finger post sign painting. Cllr Silverlight has completed the course and now has the required qualification. He reported the training was excellent but had been intense with lots to cover. Four out of the seven attendees were from Parish Councils. Cllr Lacey can supply cones and basic signs. Cllr Silverlight and Cllr Nutt are now planning which signs to paint and Cllr Mrs Drury has offered to help with the painting.
e) Information about Ciderthon Half Marathon. SCC has had notification that the Ciderthon Half Marathon is proposing to take place on Sunday 10th May 2020. This event will affect residents and businesses in Bradford on Tone, Trull, Comeytrowe and West Buckland as it requires full road closures up to 5 hours in length. The event is expected to attract 900+ runners plus supporters/family members. It is proposed to start and end at Sheppy's Cider on the A38. The event organiser was asked to provide SCC with a detailed Traffic Management (TM) Plan and to confirm to SCC at an early stage that she has carried out a full consultation with all affected business and residents. The TM plan is reported to be lacking in details and the maps are not to a standard SCC would wish to see. They do not believe she has carried out any consultation to date. SCC do have concerns regarding the safety of this event taking place on the highway especially as the route has 13 cider stops and promotes drinking with an 'after party' to be hosted at Sheppy's. This event did take place last year (on different roads) and led to a large number of complaints from members of the public and businesses. It is reported that the police share SCC's concerns and are unlikely at this stage to give support to this event.
f) To note a temporary closure of Hockholler Lane 6th February 2020, 9:30am to 15:30pm. The order prohibits all traffic from proceeding along Hockholler Road from 480m south east of the junction with Heatherton Park Road, south-eastwards for a distance of 220 metres. This order will enable Utility Services Ltd to carry out poling works on behalf of BT Openreach The works are expected to last for 3 days (09:30-15:30)
A temporary Closure of Budleigh Road and Ruggin Road from Budleigh Road; the junction with Chelmsine Lane, northwards for 400m and Ruggin Road; the junction with Budleigh Road, westwards for 155m for a total distance of 555 metres will become effective on 3 February 2020 and the works are expected to last for 4 days (09:30-15:30). This will enable BT Openreach to access overhead network to renew a faulty aerial cable.
f) Any other highways matters. The Department for Transport has informed the Parish Council about the proposed stopping up of highway at 4 Peacock Cottages, West Buckland, Somerset, TA21 9JX. The owners have discovered that the area where they plan to build their porch is owned by Highways.
Cllr Thorne has given the Clerk the details of the person that needs to be contacted regarding the removal of the silt under the bridge at the bottom of Sawyers Hill. A site meeting with Mr Lebrun will be arranged and Cllr Mrs Blogg and Cllr Nutt will attend.

136/01/20. To receive reports from:

a) County Cllr. A written report was circulated by email prior to the meeting (Appendix A).

b) District Cllr. No report.

c) Police. No report since the last meeting.

d) NALC Conference. A written report from Cllr Mitton was circulated prior to the meeting (Appendix B). Cllr Mitton noted this was the launch of 'Reaching Out' which is about tackling loneliness. Cllr Mitton suggested the Council should find out if loneliness is an issue in the parish. Cllr Mrs Drury said the WI had picked up on this and she will find out whether they have any information and/or plans to tackle this. SWTC Community Engagement Officers and Village Agents also have responsibility for this. Loneliness is also being discussed by Churches and West Buckland will soon have a Village Chaplain who will be talking to people in the parish. Everyone has a role to play and there is a need to work together. This will be an agenda item for the next meeting.

e) SALC West Area Meeting. Notes produced by Steve Altria, Clerk to Creech St. Michael Parish Council, were circulated prior to the meeting (Appendix C). Cllr Mitton and Cllr Mrs Peace were unable to represent West Buckland Parish Council at this meeting. The clerk said she understood the purpose of this meeting was to discuss how SWTC would work with Town and Parish Councils and that didn't appeared to have happened.

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

137/01/20. Finance: to agree and authorise any payments. It was resolved to approve the following payments: Mrs J Larcombe - £318.75 Clerk's salary and expenses (Payment authorisation no 1920/28)

Cllr C Silverlight - £24.75 mileage expenses for Chapter 8 training session (Payment authorisation no 1920/29).

138/01/20. 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. The tie has been removed from the Acer tree.

b) To report on meeting with SWT Council Community Engagement Officer & others to discuss grass cutting contract. Cllr Mrs Blogg and the Clerk met with Claire Thackray, SWTC Community Engagement Lead for East Taunton (rural wards) and two members of the Open Space team to discuss the problems experienced at the start of the last grass cutting season and requirements for the 2020 grass cutting season. The emptying of the bin in the play area was discussed as no one seems to know who is doing this. SWTC were not aware of any of their employees being instructed to do this although they admitted it could be happening in error. A quote will be produced by SWTC for cutting the grass in the play area and emptying the dog bin by the motorway.

c) Any other playing field matters. No other playing field matters.

139/01/20. Footpaths: any footpath matters brought forward. No matters brought forward.

140/01/20. Future of Local Government in Somerset – Next steps. Cllr Mitton reported that SALC's view will be neutral and they have commissioned work with the larger and smaller of the councils in Somerset to get a picture of what Town and Parish Councils want to take on and what they are prepared to take on from the County and District Councils. He felt the willingness and capacity to take on wasn't there.

141/01/20. Correspondence and items of interest. The following correspondence was noted:
NHS Somerset CCG public consultation on the future location of adult acute mental health beds. It was felt you would need to have some experience of mental health issues to respond to this consultation.

142/01/20. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion. There was no urgent business.

County Cllr Thorne joined the meeting at this point.

143/01/20. County Cllr Report. Cllr Thorne has followed up an email request to the Parish Council from a resident who would like a 20 mph speed restriction on the lane where he lives which is the old Chelston road. He thought it would be easy to arrange for a bollard to block the exit at the Wellington end but has found that is not the case. According to highways it would be expensive to put in place and a turning area would need to be provided for refuse and recycling lorries. He has spoken to the Leader of SCC who has said he will speak to officers.
It was clarified that the £2.83 billion quoted by South Somerset Council to go carbon neutral by 2050 (their budget for 83 years) would be the cost for everyone in that District Council area to go carbon neutral.

144/01/20. Date of the next meeting. The next meeting will be on Tuesday 25th February 2020.

Appendix A

Future of Local Government in Somerset – next steps. For the last two years or so, the Leaders and Chief Executives of all of Somerset's five local authorities have been meeting regularly to discuss the future shape of local government in the county. Our population continues to grow and age, funding for local government continues to lag behind demand and the county (and region) has relatively low productivity and wages, as well as poor social mobility. We all agree that staying the same is not an option. Following in-depth research an independent report setting out the pros, cons and possibilities of various options has been with us since February last year. This has finally been published. The options range from the various councils working closer together, to the creation of a single 'Unitary' Authority. All the options have merit, and each has the potential to save millions. There are dedicated web pages where a copy of the report can be viewed - www.onesomerset.org.uk. Cllr Thorne believes the 'Unitary' Authority option is the most cost effective and best way forward for Somerset. It would mean disbanding the County Council and the four District councils and creating one new Council to deliver all services. In doing so, it would reduce duplication and end the complications, confusion and inefficiencies that inevitably come with two layers of local government. City, Town and Parish councils and councillors would remain outside the reorganisation and this could be an opportunity for them to develop new roles with access to funding streams. It would be simpler for our residents and partner agencies and offer so much potential investment into frontline services. Extra money could mean investment in schools, roads, housing services, public transport, climate change initiatives. I intend to make the case for a single Authority and seek ways of progressing that option. That work will start immediately, and I hope that you will participate as this develops. Nothing has been decided yet and this is the start of what will be a long process. Firstly, to get to a point of an initial decision being made – this will require Government support. There will then be considerable work to turn this into reality and to implement it. This is an opportunity for Somerset to share in the benefits of a single tier of local Government that can already be seen in Wiltshire, Dorset, Cornwall, Bath &North East Somerset, North Somerset and more than 130 other authorities.

Appendix B.

National Association of Local Councils Annual Conference 28/29 October 2019

The Annual Conference was held for the third year at Milton Keynes. As in previous years it was combined with the AGM of the Association. A number of delegates had travel difficulties and both I and LW were stuck on trains heading into Birmingham. I understand that the Conference will be held somewhere else in 2020.The AGM is attended by representatives of the 39 County Associations in England.

Apart from considering the Annual report and the Accounts of the Association the AGM discussed three issues. There was a minor constitutional change involving the appointment of Vice Presidents The AGM agreed that the affiliation fees for members would be increased to 7.2 pence per member with a cap for the very large Councils. This is an increase of about 3%.

The AGM also considered a motion from the Isle of Wight County Association. Councils affiliate to the National Association by joining their geographical County Association. The Isle of Wight is the second smallest County Association in England. A number of the local councils on the Island have not joined that Association and have been offered associate membership of the Hampshire County Association. This has caused major difficulties between the two Associations for several years. Despite attempts to resolve this issue it has not been possible to sort out difficulties to date. Further discussions between the parties concerned will be held and the Conference charged the Management Board of the Association with producing a service level agreement setting out the respective roles, working relations and expectations of service delivery between the county and national associations.

The County Association sent four representatives to the Annual Conference. The Chairman of the Local Government Association addressed the Conference about how Local Councils should influence the Queens Speech and the proposed spending review to build stronger local communities.

Ten workshops were held during the two day conference covering:

Investing in your communities (Tackling austerity)
Protecting communities from cybercrime
Creating safer communities *
Making communities healthier*
Strengthening rural communities
Empowering young people in their communities
Communicating effectively in communities*
Fairer funding for communities
Connecting communities through community transport*
I attended the workshops starred*. Other representatives attended the other 6 workshops.
The workshops which I attended were of varying value.
The workshop on creating safer communities emphasised the importance a working closely with PCSOs and putting in place local initiatives to advise and involve the public in crime reduction initiatives. The presenters spoke specifically about work in Sussex between the Police and local communities where the PC holds meetings twice a year involving representatives from local councillors and the role of community safety partnerships. They also mentioned the use of the 101 service and community wardens.
The workshop on making communities healthier concentrated on the launch of NALCs new strategy on reducing loneliness in the community. The workshop covers issues such as mental health, social isolation, learning difficulties activities and exercise and emphasised the opportunity for local councils to disseminate information and link with local voluntary organisations including signposting.
The workshop on communicating effectively with communities may have been of some use to larger councils but in general it did not work The Councillor who was supposed to be co-presenting the session did not turn up and the workshop was rushed.
I found the workshop on connecting communities through transport interesting especially the role of local councils in lobbying primary councils, the production of neighbourhood plans scrutinising local (and transport) plans community transport projects and inventive use of CIL money. On the other hand the exercise set by the presenters was of little practical use.
Princess Anne attended the Conference and attended a number of the workshops. She also spoke to the Conference.
The Conference also had a general session on climate change.

Appendix C

SALC West Area Meeting 17 October 2019

The meeting format was a Q and A with the Leader of Somerset West and Taunton Council Cllr Frederica Smith-Roberts, two of her Portfolio holders: Cllr Peter Pilkington, climate change, and Cllr Marcus Kravis, Economic and Asset Management, and one of her Senior Managers, Nick Bryant Head of Strategy. Apologies were received from Justin Robinson (SALC) and the Somerset West and Taunton District Council Chief Executive who were ill.

FRS advised that taking leadership at the formation of the new council had proved an exciting and challenging time. Things hadn't gone to plan and there was over spending on redundancy with 200 staff leaving instead of expected 120. IT and Business Process Improvement work hadn't been done. She decided to focus on providing basic services to residents and then over time resolving the problems. They are now trying to do the big picture stuff as well. NB advised he was leading the Local Plan Review.

Areas discussed in Q and A;

1. Poor broadband in rural areas– FRS said we pulled out of Gigaclear contract and are now determining what to do next.

2. Steve Altria asked for a copy of IT and Business Process plan -FRS agreed to circulate.
3. No one knows who to contact and there is a need for a directory. FRS suggested using the portal in the interim.
4. There are no Full Council meetings in Williton, is SWTC pulling out of West Somerset? – FRS we hold Executive, Scrutiny and other meetings in Williton. Full Council is too large for the room.
5. EU prosperity funding ending – a new government scheme shows Somerset as medium need whilst Devon is high need. Have we missed a trick? FRS - we will examine and make representations.
6. No liaison between planning and building control (later provided by Sedgemoor Council) which is important as no Building Control compliance has to be done by planning enforcement. FSR will look into.
7. Cessation of providing planning application plans-FRS we got communications wrong .Yes we are moving to paperless office. Suggested were large plan is needed applicants agent is asked for a plan direct.
8. Planning enforcement delays – Nick Bryant explained it was proving the most difficult area to staff and is currently being covered by 1.8 FTE specialist agency staff.
9. Food, each Cllr should put on their wellies and visit a farm- Cllr Pilkington and Cllr Kravis are both farmers. FRS - there is a Somerset wide food policy setting out agreed plans already in place.
10. Drains blocked, lack of street sweeping-will raise with Highways.
11. Why is a planning application needed to move from farming to horticultural? This is a national requirement.
12. Need for family farms to be permitted to have add houses for sons. NB we have to ensure applications are legitimate as SWTC doesn't want new houses being open in open countryside across the county.
13. FRS highlighted Govt cutting of Council funding and that circa half of ratepayers pay to SWTC now goes on waste alone!
14. A Parish Councillor suggested the Local Plan should be compiled from local neighbourhood Plans- NB said most PC's don't have a NH Plan. FRS referred to CSM as an example of a PC with one.
15. Watchet asked specific questions about the amount of housing given permission there- NB advised that the old paper mill (brown field site) had closed after the other developments had already started and SWTC decided the site needed development. New sites would not have been allowed if Paper Mill site had come available earlier.
16. Oake complained about lack of buses. FRS - Buses come under SCC
17. Park and Ride bus service, questioned the wisdom of shutting on a Saturday. FRS - we've agreed to fund Saturday opening through to the end of March. SWTC would like the responsibility for Park and Rides.
18. Electric car points. FRS - SWTC is looking to bid to Govt for funding.
19. Developments lack of Green attributes. NB we used to have our own high standards but nationally these been banned. Govt now looking at introducing a national code from 2025.Need to see what we can do in the interim
20. Green agenda. PP also need to see what we can do re methane, carbon etc
21. Public Conveniences -will there be investment. FRS no plan to return toilets back to SWTC .Budget was set by shadow authority now SWTC is looking to see what it can afford to do. Probably going to introduce a "Clean sweep" initiative.
22. Car parking charges, a difference exists within authorities area. FRS - we can't fix everything overnight but will be examining . Needs may be different.
23. Parks Green Flag awards. SWTC has 6 but none in West Somerset. FRS = we will use the knowledge we have acquired to spread to West Somerset parks so expect in future..

24. Locality Leads .I asked when they were visiting PCs. FRS agreed to prompt them to do introductory visits. SALC asked each PC to advise if not had a visit yet (almost all had not).

FRS – we are having four new directors, each on £100k, to ensure targets are achieved; three have to find funding for their own post and quickly!