

WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

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The Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 7th January 2020 in the Main Hall, West Buckland Village Hall at 7.30pm.

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

In attendance: County Cllr J Thorne, three members of the public and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

114/01/20. To accept apologies for absence. Apologies were accepted from Cllr Mrs L Peace.
Apologies were received from District Cllr R Habgood.

115/01/20. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda. Cllr Lacey declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 119/01/20 c) as the appellant is a family member. Cllr Silverlight declared a personal interest in item 121/01/20.

116/01/20. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 26/11/19. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and duly signed by the Chair.

117/01/20. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda. There were no matters arising.

118/01/20. Democratic Period. A member of the public strongly expressed their concerns about planning application 46/19/0034 and said it was a total overdevelopment of the site. A second member of the public objected to the application explaining that it would only be 8' from her back door and would block her light. The amended boundary includes a car parking space used by residents of 2a Dyers Close.
Four years ago, following problems with flooding, silt was removed from the river at the bottom of Sawyers Hill. The silt has now built up again and the Parish Council was requested to ask for it to be removed.
Explaining that his property shared frontage with Perry Farm a parishioner spoke about the issues relating to rocks on this verge/shared frontage. SCC won't maintain the verge so the property owners have maintained it. The rocks were put on the verge to prevent it becoming rutted but the parishioner has been advised by Highways that, although they appreciate the work done to maintain the verge, the rocks could be seen as an obstruction. If a vehicle was to collide with a rock the person who placed the rocks on the verge could be liable. It was suggested that the parishioner could ask the Parish Council to become involved in verge protection work. Cllr Silverlight declared a personal interest as a neighbour. The Clerk asked the parishioner if he would be able to share his correspondence with Highways.

119/01/20. Planning:

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

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

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

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.

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

46/19/0034 Change of use of former village shop store into 1 No. one bedroom dwelling at 2a Dyers Close, West Buckland (resubmission of 46/19/0015)

Comment: West Buckland Parish Council continue to recommend refusal for this application. This is overdevelopment of a very small site and will affect the amenities of neighbouring properties. Reconfiguration of the existing parking spaces does not address the overdevelopment of the site.

46/19/0038 Variations of Condition No's 02 (approved plans) and 04 (highway works) of application 46/12/0007 at Blackdown Garden Centre, Wellington Road, West Buckland

Comment: West Buckland Parish Council support the granting of approval subject to:

- Somerset County Council Highways approval of the plans;
- The scheme not increasing the risk of flooding

46/19/0039 Erection of single storey infill extension to front of 18 Lee Park, West

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

b) To receive decisions from planning applications determined by SWT Council. There were no decisions.

c) To note planning appeal APP/W3330/W/19/3239808 Removal of Condition No. 11 of application 46/04/0020 to allow property to be occupied as a single dwelling house at Church View, Sawyers Hill, West Buckland (resubmission of 46/17/0052) Valley Cottage, Sawyers Hill, West Buckland and consider whether the Council wants to add any further comments. Cllr Lacey declared a personal and prejudicial interest and left the room. The Council supports approval of this application. Councillors referred to the planning appeal which overturned TDBC's refusal to allow a change from holiday use to residential for property at Gerbestone and noted how much further away from the village those properties were. Referring to comments made by the planning officer that this property was in a country setting it was noted that it is surrounded by houses. The village itself has no lighting and residents do not want it.

d) Parish Affordable Housing Needs Survey Report. Follow the survey in September a report has now been produced and it has been approved by SWT Council. The report identifies a need for 10 affordable housing units in West Buckland. . It is recommended that based on the survey respondents, the units provided should be two-bedroom properties and be a mix of social rent and low-cost home ownership homes. There should be at least 4 social rented units and at least 2 of these should be two-bedroom bungalows. There was concern about the independence of the survey as Falcon Housing are expecting to provide the affordable housing for a proposed development in the village, for which the survey had been undertaken. During the developer's presentation to the Parish Council it was claimed there would be 28 dwellings and 50% (14) of these would be affordable.

e) Any other planning matters. There were no other planning matters.

It was agreed to bring the following item forward on the agenda.

120/01/20. County Cllr Report. A report was circulated by email prior to the meeting (Appendix A). Cllr Thorne said there would be an announcement from Cllr David Fothergill, Leader of Somerset County Council regarding the future of Local Government in Somerset and the next steps. He is moving to try and bring in one large council to deliver all services in Somerset. It is claimed that there would be potential savings of £47 million a year. Doing nothing is not an option. Cllr Mitton pointed out that when TDBC and WSC merged it was claimed there would be savings and he wondered how much was actually saved. Twelve years ago a unitary council was discussed and the District Councils said they would all work together but this hasn't happened. The work hived off to Town and Parish Councils would be greatly increased under a unitary council.

One member of the public left the meeting.

121/01/20. Highways.

a) Any other highways matters. A parishioner has emailed the Parish Council to say he had contacted Somerset highways department regarding placing a speed restriction on the lane where he lives which is the old Chelston road. The lane has become a rat run early in the morning and at other busy times of the day when traffic is queueing at the roundabout. Vehicles turn out of the queue and proceed at excessive speed up the lane to jump a few places in the row of traffic. This poses two problems, the main one being safety for the residents of this road: it also has a pedestrian access to the trading estate which is used by cyclists and pedestrians alike. The other is the inconvenience of the residents of this road in getting out and joining the queue as the vehicles already in the queue do not let cars out because they know it is used as a rat run. He feels that if there were a 20mph speed limit it might deter vehicles from using it as a rat run. He has been told he needs to go through the Parish Council. Councillors pointed out that a 20 mph speed limit would not be enforced. West Buckland village is becoming a rat run as rush hour as people are trying to cut pout Chelston. It was felt that closing one end of the lane would be a better solution but might be an issue for residents. The email will be forwarded to Cllr Thorne.

Cllr Thorne left the meeting.

b) Matters arising from previous meeting/s. None.

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

d) Flooding issues in the parish during recent heavy rainfall. The issues were on a day when there was a period of particularly heavy rain and when there were widespread reports of flooding. The issue in Frogs Lane was caused by 2 drains being blocked. These will be jetted. It was noted that it has always flooded in this area.

e) To discuss reported issue of rocks on verges on Buckland Hill and some adjoining roads. Cllr Silverlight declared a personal interest. It was decided to have a discussion on this at the next meeting. The Clerk will find out whether the Parish Council has the 'power' to carry out verge protection work. It was suggested that CIL money could be used for this if it does. There was concern about the Parish Council's liability. SCC will be asked if they would sell or licence the verge to the householders who could then put them in their approved schemes..

f) Temporary road closure - West Buckland Road from the junction with Buckland Farm Road, northwards for a distance of 240 metres will be closed on 14th January 2020 between 09:30 – 15:30 for 3 days to enable Utility Services Ltd to carry out poing works on behalf of BT Openreach. The temporary closure was noted. Calling this piece of road West Buckland Road was queried but it was thought that it would be an unnamed piece of road

otherwise.

A member of the public left the meeting.

122/01/20. To receive reports from:

- a) **County Cllr.** Covered under items 120/01/20.
- b) **District Cllr.** No report.
- c) **Police.** Police Reports for November and December had been circulated by email since the last meeting.
- d) **NALC Conference.** Deferred to the next meeting.
- e) **Any Other Reports.** None.

123/1/20. Finance

- a) **To agree and authorise any payments.** The following payment was agreed: West Buckland Village Hall Trust - £16.00 hire of meeting room (Payment ref: 1920/27)
- b) **To discuss and agree renewal of subscription to Somerset Playing Fields Association.** It was agreed to renew the annual subscription at a cost of £15.00 (Payment ref: 1920/26)

124/01/20. 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 seat has not been repaired.
- b) **Any other playing field matters.** The straps around the Acer tree and the support are getting too tight and need to be cut.

125/01/20. Footpaths: any footpath matters brought forward. None.

126/01/20. Correspondence and items of interest. There was no further correspondence or items of interest.

127/01/20. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion. There was no urgent business.

128/01/20. Date of the next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 28th January 2020.

Appendix A

- Scrutiny –an independent review of scrutiny has been carried out, and its conclusions were: it isn't working properly, meetings are too long, too many information-only reports, recommendations were not influencing cabinet decisions, and the political parties were making up their own minds anyway. So, changes are being recommended and should be considered at full council later this month. They include not having information-only reports, making meetings shorter by having no more than four agenda items, and not having pre-scrutiny political group meetings but instead having pre-scrutiny meetings for all councillors. A further recommendation is to have fewer meetings
- Members Improving Lives Grant Scheme – Progress with this has been slow because the scheme was paused due to 'purdah'. I hoped to be in a position to submit two bids immediately the scheme was re-opened last week. The new deadline is 30th January and I am also hopeful a further bid will come up before then.
- Finances – County is still on track for a balanced budget position by the financial year end – and without having to make further savings or reductions in frontline services. In fact, Somerset has just been named in an independent report as one of the top 10 most improved councils in the country. This backs up what the council's auditors have found, and they have recently given Somerset an improved 'Value For Money' rating. It is a far cry from 18 months ago when you may recall I was reporting to you that the auditors were saying 'if you don't do this or do that' then we would run out of money in a couple of years. It has not happened without some tough decisions and a lot of really hard work by senior managers to get to grips with budgets and to make sure they delivered on savings that had been promised. There is still a lot of uncertainty with future finances, for instance £60 million a year which we spend is currently not guaranteed to be received year on year. So, we continue to lobby hard at Government level and work with our MPs toward achieving more certainty.
- Superfast broadband – The new public consultation launched by CDS to identify remaining areas where there are no current or credible future plans (ie, in the next three years) to deliver broadband infrastructure capable of download speeds of at least 30Mbps, a month ago. CDS says this gives suppliers an opportunity to check if the CDS mapping of the area is accurate or not
- Park & Ride – The signs at the Gateway P&R site saying the Saturday service has been withdrawn have now been covered up and the moss and other vegetation covering the walkways and paved areas has been cleared. The lighting at the site which has not been working is going to be replaced but there is no timeframe as yet. An electrician has been looking at the lights this week.
- Grit bins – Before Christmas I was chasing the reasons why parish grit bins were not filled and I spoke face to face with the cabinet member for highways who said he thought they had been filled, as it had already been done in some other parts of the county. I believe all the grit bins have now been filled
- Climate change – The climate change strategy consultation which was paused because of 'purdah' is now restarting. The most local event is in Taunton Library and will now be held on Saturday, 18th January, when people can drop in any time from 10 am to 4 pm. An online survey was launched yesterday and should be available until 25th February. The link to the survey is here <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Somerset-Climate-Change-Survey-2019>. There is also a survey for young people aged 11 to 18 years here www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Somerset-Climate-Change-Survey-2019-Young-People which is open until 18th February. A tailored event for business and industry will be held at some point shortly. A draft strategy and action plan should be ready for consultation by March/April, and the final strategy document is due to be brought forward for adoption in July. The strategy will identify how Somerset councils can work together with the aim of being carbon neutral by 2030 and to adapt to predicted climate change impacts. Here is a link for anybody who wants more info www.somerset.gov.uk/climateemergency. For those who like statistics, 3,285 kt (kilotons) of CO₂ were emitted in Somerset in 2017 from industrial, domestic and transport-related sources (for comparison, one kiloton of carbon is emitted by 200 average cars in one year). Emissions in Somerset are sourced as 46.7% from the transport sector, to 29.5% from industry, and 23.8% from the domestic sector.

- A Block – I am told the work on refurbishing County Hall’s A Block is progressing according to schedule and is still on budget. We should be ready to start using it again from July. Although the project has attracted some criticism for its cost of about £10.4 million, it is an invest to save scheme which will produce annual savings for the council of £700k.
- Wellesley Hospital – I have finally managed to speak to them about the issues of litter and smoking near the hospital. I am told that two smoking shelters on either side are under construction, and patients are led on regular litterpicks as part of a programme of real life work scenarios.