# WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman – Mrs M K Blogg Clerk – Mrs J Larcombe

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**The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held virtually via Zoom on**

**Tuesday 26th January 2021 at 7.30pm.**

**Present:** Cllrs Mrs M Blogg (Chair), D Lacey, S Bellamy, Ms S Drury, D Mitton, J Nutt and

C Silverlight,

**In attendance:** District Cllr R Habgood, County Cllr J Thorne, one member of the public and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

**265/01/21. To accept apologies for absence.** Apologies were received from PCSO Hallett. Cllr

Thorne had advised the Clerk that he would arrive during the meeting.

**266/01/21. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda*.*** There were no declarations.

**267/01/21. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 05/01/21.** With Cllr Habgood’s apologies

added the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

**268/01/21. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda.** There were no matters

arising.

**269/01/21. Democratic Period.** The member of the public who had asked the Parish Council to

support his proposal for a 40mph speed limit from the south end of the existing 30mph

limit to Mole End on West Buckland Hill commented on the response received from Kate

Brown, Traffic Engineer SCC, which had been forwarded to him. He was shocked that the

Parish Council would be expected to meet the cost of putting the proposed speed limit in

place. He felt she had failed to recognise that the speed limit had been requested for safety

reasons, particularly as a lot of people walk along this road. A lot of horses, including race

horses, are also ridden along this section of road. A copy of his reply to Kate Brown had

been circulated to councillors.

He also gave an update on his initiative to bring superfast broadband to Blackmoor. The

only options are 4G or a Gigabit scheme. Twenty people have indicated their interest in

signing up and more people are coming forward but he hasn’t heard back from Openreach.

He asked which councillor at SW&T was responsible and Cllr Habgood explained it was

County Cllr David Hall that he should contact. It was noted that the Blackdown Hills

Group have been lobbying MPs about improving broadband speeds. Cllr Ms Drury said

she had contacted Rebecca Pow MP four times but she simply sends a letter to

BT/Openreach who reply that they have no plans for the area. Cllr Habgood said he was

also in contact with a councillor at Sedgemoor who has been campaigning.

**270/01/21. Planning:**

1. **To consider any planning applications received by the Parish Council prior to the**

**meeting.**

***46/21/0001*** Application for approval of all reserved matters, following Outline Approval

46/19/0006, for the erection of 1 No. dwelling in the garden to the side of Fairway,

Orchard Gardens, West Buckland. Comment: no objections.

***46/20/0020CQ*** Amended Plans Prior Approval for proposed change of use from 3

agricultural barns to 4 dwellings (Use Class 3) and associated building operations at Silver

Street Farm, Silver Street, West Buckland. Even though some changes had been made to

the plans there is still a problem with visibility and the potential for a nasty collision if the

application is approved. It was resolved to repeat the comment agreed at the Parish Council

meeting held on 24th November 2020: - West Buckland Parish Council recommends

refusal because of concerns about the safety of the entrance and egress from the site onto a

narrow stretch of Silver Street as the visibility splay is not wide enough for a road with a

60mph speed limit.

1. **To receive decisions from planning applications determined by SWT Council**

***46/20/0024/LEW*** Application for a Certificate of Lawful Development for the existing use

of Class B2 (General Industrial) on land at Moseley in the South Premises, Chelston

Business Park, Wellington – approved.

1. **SWT Local Plan Review – to discuss the suggested development site in West**

**Buckland (land east of Silver Street, residential existing (includes TDBC, SHLAA Rural 051) West of England Development, WYG. To discuss sites on the boundary of the parish.** The suggested development site in West Buckland was discussed. Cllr Bellamy declared a personal and pecuniary interest as he lives close to the site. There were concerns about the suitability of this site for development because of the additional traffic it would create. This end of Silver Street suffers from congestion because of the primary school.

The Council were also concerned about development of the site around Moonbeams Farm

Shop, Wellington (TA21 9NQ) and incursion into the AONB. They felt this area should be

designated for sports facilities. The Clerk will inform SW&T of the Council’s views. The

comment about the Moonbeams site will be shared with Wellington Town Council and

Wellington Without Parish Council.

**d) Any other planning matters.** The Clerk has contacted Highways regarding the

Council’s concerns about parking arrangements for the Blackbird Inn B & B. Angie Brook, SCC Traffic Management Public Liaison Officer, has replied that whilst the Highway Code states that you should not reverse onto the public highway, in reality the Highways Authority has no jurisdiction or means to enforce this. The best course of action would be for the Parish to contact the business owner and discuss with them the possibility of putting signs in their carpark requesting that patrons do not reverse onto the highway. It was felt that this response was not sensible as an application for development on the car park could be approved and the B & B could revert to a pub again, with no parking.

Cllr Bellamy, Cllr Ms Drury, Cllr Mitton and the Clerk attended the SW&T Planning Training Session prior to joining the Parish Council meeting.

**271/01/21. Highways.**

1. **To note any required work to be reported to SCC.** It was reported that gullies are

blocked along France Lane and the bridge near Steart Barton has been damaged.

1. **To receive an update on any outstanding highways work.** The Clerk reported that

she had contacted Highways regarding the Council’s request for a ‘Unsuitable for HGV’s’ sign at the A38 end of Hockholler Lane. Once site visits are reinstated the traffic engineer will visit the site and if there is space to get a post in there then an unsuitable for HGV sign can be erected. They are not able to do this until April, when they get access to their new budget. The contractor then has a few months to programme the works, so realistically it won’t be up much before July.

**c) To discuss the response from SCC Highways to a request for a 40 mph speed limit**

**from Blackmoor to the existing 30mph speed limit.** Kate Brown,SCC Traffic Engineer,

has responded that she will need to investigate this further and check the Department for

Transport Guidance.  She will need to drive the route and at present they are unable to

carry out site visits due to the lockdown restrictions, however she will do this once

restrictions are lifted. If it were deemed appropriate, then it would be down to the Parish to

fund such a scheme and SCC would want a 20% deposit payment before works could

commence. Costs vary depending upon the number of signs and lines required but could

cost in the region of £8,000. She noted the many letters and emails from local residents in

support of this request and attached some guidance on the process which needs to be gone

through when a request such as this is received. The Clerk was asked to reply to Kate

Brown, supporting the response sent by the member of the public, discussed under item

269/01/21. The response from the Council will point out the number of walkers and horses

that use the road and the hazardous bends. Alexandra Dunn Racing stables are at the

village end of this section and often use the road.

1. **Any other highways matters.** Cllr Ms Drury reported that a HGV had tried to turn left

into Buckland Farm from the Ruggin road and had caused real damage to the verge and ditch. She had alerted Highways as the ditch had only been cleared out four weeks before. Highways had agreed to go and have a look.

**272/01/21. To note any reports from:**

1. **County Cllr.** Cllr Thorne’s written report was circulated prior to the meeting.

Concerned was expressed by Cllr Thorne and some parish councillors that SCC staff were assisting with the roll out of the Covid-19 vaccination programme while people that had volunteered to help were not being made best use of. Some people who have volunteered are unable to get on the rota.

**b) District Cllr.** Cllr Habgood reported that some planning applications are being put on

hold because of phosphate issues. SW&T are working on how this can be mitigated and a

decision had been expected before Christmas. Offices remain closed and SW&T staff are

helping with the roll out of the Covid-19 vaccination. The budget for 2021-22 is being set

and is about to go to the Scrutiny Committee. The outcome is awaited. The Police will be

putting up their share of the community charge by £15. A scheme to support the homeless

during Covid has been successful, although here have been some issues. Planning for the

elections on May 6th has started but there is some uncertainty about them going ahead.

Unitary proposals are ongoing.

**c) Police.** PCSO Chandler’s report for January had been circulated by email. There were 10 calls into 101 and 999 for West Buckland for the month of January 2021. These calls involved three contact records; one alarm; two suspicious; three abandoned 999 calls; one road related; one missing person and one assisting other services. Out of the 10 calls made to either 999 or 101 four of these were from the same address. The resident of this address suffers from bad dementia and we have been assisting them to get the help and support they require. There were no calls for ASB. Councillors appreciated that PCSO Hallett had written his report about West Buckland and not the wider area.

**273/01/21. Finance:**

1. **To agree and authorise any payments.** It was resolved to make the following payments: SW & T Council - £213.41 last cut of grass for 2020 at the playing field and dog bin emptying (Payment ref: 2021/30)

Mrs J Larcombe **-** £311.39 Clerk’s salary, home working expenses and Zoom subscription (Payment ref: 2021/31)

£524.80 to be transferred from the Instant Access account to the Current account to return

the Current account to £500.00.

Bank balances on 31.12.20: Current account - £500.00, Instant Access - £22,502.17

The Clerk confirmed that the invoice for £223.20 from the Community Heartbeat Trust

was received and the payment was made. This was for a new battery for the defibrillator.

Cllr Silverlight reported that the pads would soon need replacing and it was agreed to order

replacement pads from the Community Heartbeat Trust.

The Clerk has sent bank reconciliations and bank statements to Cllr Mitton for checking.

1. **To review the Business Risk Assessment.** The Business Risk Assessment was

approved.

**c) Update on the application to the SCC Climate Emergency Community Fund.**

A letter has been received fromSCC explaining that they are leading on some of the

extremely important activities to address the worsening Covid-19 epidemic in the

county, including the coordination of the mass vaccination rollout and testing centres.

The impact of this has meant that many Council officers have needed to be redeployed

from their day to day roles and a number of services scaled down or even stopped in order

to support these actions. As a result of the large number of bids received to the fund and

the need to prioritise the support to the Covid-19 response, unfortunately, they will now

not be in a position to review any application to the Climate Emergency Community Fund

until after the closure of the second application window later in January 2021. Final

decision-making has been delayed until all submissions have been received across the two

windows and sufficient time and resource has been made available to consider and score

all applications submitted. There was an apology for the delay.

**274/01/21. Playing Field**

1. **Any points to note from the regular inspections.** There were no points to note

regarding the play equipment. Cllr Nutt reported that the sign underneath the Acer tree in the playing field was broken. The Council will look at replacing the sign.

1. **Update on cutting the play area hedge.** The inside of the hedge in the play area has

been cut by someone with a small tractor. They have not made a charge and were thanked by the Council. The top of the hedge still needs cutting and it is hoped the contractor who cut the rest of the field will be able to complete this.

A discussion was held about grass cutting for the 2021 season and quotes will be obtained.

1. **Any other Playing Field matters.** No decision has been made about securing the new

bench in place.

**275/01/21. Footpaths:**

**a) To further discuss SCC’s policy regarding objections to applications for footpath**

**diversions.** It was felt the process to apply for a footpath diversion should be a fair one and if a town or parish council supports a proposal to divert a footpath then the county councillor should be involved. Cllr Thorne said councillors set council policy and strategic direction and then sit back. Councillors can raise issues, but officers make the decisions on spending money. He has had some success in following things up. Cabinet members can give orders or instructions. Cllr Thorne said he was dealing with an issue in Neroche where a bridleway was blocker 15 years ago. The costs of unblocking a path can be reclaimed from the land owner. He wrote a letter 6 weeks ago but hasn’t received a reply. Some normal work has stopped while staff assist with the vaccination roll out. It was agreed that a letter would be sent to the Head of the Rights of Way team saying that it appears to the Parish Council that the decision process for footpath diversions appears to be broken if an objection is received.

**b) Update on the closure of Footpath T29/34 and T29/39 by the Landowner.** There

was no update.

**c) Any other footpath matters.** WG14/11 the stile in the field below the playing field

with a kissing gate.

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**276/01/21. To discuss broadband issues in parts of the parish.** Three companies have been selected

to roll-out full fibre networks on behalf of the Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS)

programme, backed by Government funding. Airband, Truespeed and Wessex Internet will

be installing full fibre across Devon and Somerset over the next four years. Airband will be

rolling out full fibre across the rural areas of Somerset West and Taunton but there are no

details of what the roll out will be. Properties in Ruggin are connected to the Pitminster

phone exchange. Pitminster, as a parish, have put together a scheme to improve their

broadband speeds and an application has been submitted to Openreach. There has been

100% sign up and they will have over £150,000 of government funding to support the

scheme. This scheme will not include properties in Ruggin because of the additional cost

that would be involved in taking fibre across fields etc. Cllr Ms Drury said she had

checked on the Airband website to see whether they would be connecting Ruggin but the

website had come up with the response that it wasn’t available in Ruggin and she was

angry. Fibre is working well for properties in West Buckland but outside of the village,

speeds are much slower. The Parish Council has been informed that there is an issue in

Hockholler. People who are working from home and having to home school their children

due to lockdown are finding it very challenging. There is also so much demand on 4G now

that it is failing. Cllr Habgood said he has been bringing up the issue of poor broadband

speeds at Rural Services Network (RSN) meetings and was on a call with a Minister

yesterday (25th January). The Minister was not aware of the problems and thought

everything was alright. It is a concern that network plans seem to be a secret, people should

be able to know where cables have been laid. Cllr Thorne said he has found that everything

is deemed confidential and Connecting Devon and Somerset are not accountable. The first

take up was higher than expected and CDS are getting extra money which they are

supposed to be using to connect areas like Ruggin, Even when the rollout of superfast

broadband is complete 1% of properties in Devon and Somerset will still not have access.

A scheme is being looked at for Blackmoor but someone on the West Buckland exchange

needs to take up the mantle for the other properties in the parish that have poor broadband

speed and agree to be the contact person. It was suggested that the person at Hockholler

who contacted the Parish Council about poor broadband speed should be contacted by the

Clerk.

**277/01/21. Correspondence to note.** There was no further correspondence. The Clerk reported that

prior to the meeting she had been reading that the legislation that allows the Parish Council

to hold remote meetings would come to an end on 7th May 2021 and the Government are

saying it will not be extended.

**278/01/21. Any urgent business at the Chairman’s discretion.** There was no urgent business.

**279/01/21. Date and arrangements for the next meeting.** The next meeting will be held on 23rd

February 2021 via Zoom.

Signed

Date