

## WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

### DRAFT MINUTES

These minutes will be agreed at the Parish Council meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025 (changed to 25<sup>th</sup> February) and might be subject to slight amendment

**The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 7th January 2025 at 7.30pm in the Committee Room, at West Buckland Village Hall.**

**Present:** Cllr's C Silverlight, Ms S Drury, A Paul and Mrs B Moore.

**In attendance:** PCSO Bramley, Somerset Councillor R Henley, three members of the Ham Stream Maintenance Group and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

Cllr Silverlight welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished all present a Happy New Year.

**95/01/25. To receive apologies for absence.** Apologies were accepted from Cllr S Bellamy.

**96/01/25. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda.** No disclosures of interests.

**97/01/25. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 26/11/24 as an accurate record of the meeting.** The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and they were duly signed by the Chair.

**98/01/25. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda (for information only).** No matters arising.

**99/01/25. To continue to discuss broadband issues in the parish.** No update since the last meeting. Cllr Ms Drury has been having conversations with some parishioners and has encouraged them to contact Gideon Amos MP. She commented that he has done more in 4 months to address the broadband issues than the previous MP ever did.

Cllr Henley joined the meeting during the start of the following item.

**100/01/25. Democratic Period.** Members of the Ham Stream Maintenance Group introduced themselves to the Parish Council. They explained that Asham Lane, Ham on which most of their dwellings are located has always been prone to occasional flooding, but these occurrences are now becoming far more regular. It has probably been affected by development in Wellington where so much new housing has gone up. Flooding is now happening at any time of the year and there is significantly more water. Twelve properties are impacted and although it hasn't flooded the houses yet it has lapped right up to them. When the road is flooded residents cannot get in or out. On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> January the water was over a foot deep where it backs up. Drainage is a problem because the water needs somewhere to go.

In the last few months the residents have come together as an informal group and have started to make contact with the various agencies who may be able to help or advise them. Somerset Highways have told them the situation isn't serious enough and there are people who have responsibilities to keep

watercourses clear. If your land borders a stream you have riparian responsibilities. In the past Highways have dredged an area further on but this has not been done recently. The group do dig out the stream on the borders of their properties and have paid for a digger to dig out the next section. The group are trying to build a relationship with the landowner and his tenant.

They have had a very useful meeting with Hugo van Dorssen from the Natural Flood Management Advisory Group (FWAG) and are also in contact with Dr Bel Deering from Somerset Rivers Authority. Both of them advised the group to make contact with their Parish Council, particularly as it may be eligible to apply for the new CFAF funding that has just been released. A bid for up to £20,000 can be made. As the group is not constituted it cannot apply in its own right and would need support from the Parish Council to submit an application.

Cllr Henley offered to go and meet with the group as he might be able to put them in touch with the right people at highways.

Councillors felt the responsibility was really with Somerset Council and the Rivers Authority rather than the Parish Council. Somerset Council's Planning Department should be taking into account issues such as this when they are approving development.

The group were congratulated on the work they have already done. The Parish Council will work with the group and look at supporting them to submit an application for funding.

The 3 members of the public left the meeting.

#### **101/01/25. Reports**

**a) PCSO.** PCSO Bramley reported that it has been pretty quiet and he had only received one call out to West Buckland. Two people would like to start up Speedwatch again. Cllr Silverlight updated PCSO Bramley on the Parish Council's plans to install Speed Indicator Devices as the first line of attack against speeding. PCSO Bramley offered to try and arrange for an officer trained to carry out speed checks to do one in West Buckland. Cllr Mrs Moore asked if this could be done at the Silver Street entrance to the village because speeding appears to be more of a problem on the approaches to the village than in the village itself. She said her husband is interested in being part of a speed watch group. Anyone interested can apply through the Avon & Somerset Police website

<https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/apply/community-speedwatch/>

Councillors reported that someone with a noisy motorbike is travelling through the village at each end of the working day causing a noise nuisance. PCSO Bramley explained it was very technical to say how loud it can be. Motorbike users often don't realise how annoying a noisy bike can be. PCSO Bramley was told that vehicles parking opposite the turning from Silver Street into Crown Hill was an issue. He agreed to check but he has to show a lot of leeway in small villages. Attention was drawn to Highway Code Rule 238 on Waiting and Parking. PCSO Bramley was thanked for attending the meeting.

PCSO Bramley left the meeting.

**b) Somerset Council.** Cllr Henley reported that he has been chasing up the request for street lights at Ham and the position with Somerset Council's plans to sell a council house in West Buckland.

Wellington Town Council are seeking a review of their boundary alongside the

Local Government Boundary Commission for England review of the boundary and electoral arrangements in Somerset. The prime reason behind this thinking is there is a concern that there could be new housing developments in the future just outside Wellington Town Council's current boundary where the location means that the residents of those developments will naturally graduate to the town and use its facilities as it is close, but the Council will not receive any S106/ CIL funding to develop its facilities to support the increased population. As part of the LGBCE review Somerset Council would like to reduce the number of its councillors from 110 to 96. At present all electoral divisions have 2 councillors but they are working towards only having 1. As part of the review Somerset Council is suggesting West Buckland goes in with the Wellington East Division. Another suggestion is for it to go into a division with Blackdown Hills parishes. Cllr Henley was hopeful that new funding arrangements for bus services in Somerset might be of benefit to his efforts to get a bus service into West Buckland.

Cllr Ms Drury checked that Cllr Henley had received emails and a video she had forwarded to him about a highways problem on Lipe Hill.

**c) Any other reports.** No other reports.

**102/01/25. Ham Stream Flood Group – request for support with a bid to the newly released Community Flood Action Fund (CFAF) set up by the Somerset Rivers Authority.** This was discussed under the democratic period item.

**103/01/25. Planning:**

**a) To consider any planning applications received by the Parish Council prior to the meeting.**

**46/24/0013** Erection of orangery to the rear of Georges Farm, West Buckland Road, West Buckland. Comment: no objection.

**46/24/0014** Demolition of agricultural barn and erection of 1 No. dwelling (in lieu of 46/23/0003CQ) at Catsbear Barns, Ruggin Road, West Buckland. Comment: West Buckland Parish Council do not support the application. The existing barns have been granted permission for conversion to dwelling as Class Q applications. Councillors felt that allowing the barns to be demolished in order that a completely new dwelling, with a different height and different footprint, would amount to development in the open countryside, on the edge of a National Landscape area (formally AONB) and could set a precedent of allowing development way beyond Class Q.

West Buckland Parish Council feel that there is insufficient assurance that the development would be better than the existing approved class Q Planning Application 46/23/0003CQ, or be of a scale, design and layout compatible with the rural character of the area and create a residential curtilage which would not harm the rural character of the area and so comply with the requirements of local plan policy DM2.

In the Climate Emergency Checklist; Q1 - Does the development reduce the need to travel? (inc. through location, mix of uses and digital connectivity). The applicant answers - The site is within walking distance of local services and facilities. West Buckland Parish Council questions this answer as the only very limited local services and facilities are in West Buckland village which is a distance of 1.5km along narrow unlit rural roads with no footpaths. West Buckland Parish Council have concerns that the proposed development would be

completely reliant on use of vehicles (there being no public transport services) and thus contrary to Core Strategy policies SP1 (Sustainable Development Locations) and DM2 (Development in the countryside).

In the Biodiversity Checklist the applicant answers NO to the question; 'Will the proposal have the potential to impact on ponds, lakes, rivers, streams or water filled ditches (on the land or nearby within 500m and linked by habitat)?' West Buckland Parish Council are concerned that the proposal does not address the possible impact on the pond situated approximately 200m north/north-west of the planning site (BNG Grid Ref - ST 17704 19032). There are no records of what protected species, if any, could be on site. There is also a stream and ditch across the road approximately 15m south-west of the planning site and there seems to be a watercourse that is culverted under the road to the west of the site that is showing on the relevant OS 1:2500 map, which ought to be considered in the application with regard to RAMSAR (Somerset Levels).

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

**46/23/0021** Change of use of garage to cafe and retail area at Blackbird Inn, Wellington Road, West Buckland (retention of part works already undertaken).  
Decision: conditional approval.

**c) Any other planning matters.** No other planning matters.

**104/01/25. Highways.**

**a) To note any required work to be reported to SC.** A parishioner has reported that during recent downpours of rain the tar and chippings laid on the road surface of Lipe Hill in October 2024 has been washed away into the watercourse at the bottom of the hill. This is the second time this has happened. Due to erosion of the sides of the road water is missing the drains and cascading down the hill like a river. This has been reported to highways. Cllr Henley has agreed to follow this up with highways.

**b) To receive an update on outstanding highways work (Kerb at Dyers Close and drainage in Silver Street.** No update.

**c) To discuss possible sites for SID/s and submitting an application.** Councillors will agree a date in February to meet and look at suitable sites.

**d) Update on parishioner request for streetlights at Ham.** No update.

**e) Any other highways matters.** Cameron Mann, Headteacher West Buckland Primary School has asked for his thanks to the Parish Council to be placed on record for their efforts in getting the road markings and lines repainted. These are really helpful and the new white bar line across the drop curb has been well received by the parents.

The 30 mph roundels that were agreed for Sawyers Hill and Buckland Hill still need to be painted on the road surface. Also still outstanding is the repainting of the slow down lines on Silver Street.

**105/01/25. Finance:**

**a) To agree and authorise any payments.** It was resolved to make the following payment at this point and move forward to a formal agreement with the Village Hall Committee about the supply of electricity for the EV charging point and the charge for it, which needs to have an adjustment for electricity produced by the solar panels: West Buckland Village Hall Trust - £132.34 Electricity used by EV Charging Point (Payment ref: 2425/45).

Since the last meeting a bank service charge of £6.00 was paid from the current account on 30<sup>th</sup> November and again on 31<sup>st</sup> December.

A payment of £84.00 has been made to West Buckland Village Hall Trust for hire of the Committee Room for 6 meetings (Payment ref: 2425/49); £135.17 has been paid to Countrywide for grass cutting during 2024-25 (Payment ref: 2425/50); £323.14 has been paid to Mrs J Larcombe for December salary and home working expenses (Payment ref: 2425/51) and £40.60 to HM Revenue & Customs for December PAYE (Payment ref: 2425/52).

Transfers were made from the Current Account to the Instant Access account to bring the balance back to £1,000.00.

**b) To note any receipts since the last meeting and the bank accounts balances.** Since the last meeting £41.74 has been received from Nexus, income from the EV Charging Point. Bank interest of £147.49 has also been received. The current account balance is £1,000 and the Instant Access Account balance is £21,380.74

**c) To agree the budget for 2025-26.** Following discussion at the last meeting the draft budget had been updated. The budget circulated prior to the meeting was agreed.

**d) To agree the precept for 2025-26.** It was resolved to request a precept of £13,324.

**e) Bank reconciliations.** Deferred to the next meeting.

**106/02/25. Playing Field:**

**a) Any points to note from the regular inspections.** Cllr Bellamy was not present to give a report.

**b) Any other playing field matters.** Prices will be obtained for a replacement pedestrian gate for the play area.

**107/02/25. Footpaths: any footpath matters.** It was reported that a stile on Footpath WG14/23 is very slippery and dogs cannot get through it. It was felt the stile wasn't designed for a public footpath.

**108/02/25. To discuss any response from the Village Agent regarding support to enable older residents to remain living in the parish.** Cllr Bellamy has a meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> January and will report back at the next meeting.

**109/01/25. Correspondence.** There was no further correspondence.

**110/01/25. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion (Not for Decisions).** No urgent business.

**111/01/25. To note the date of the next meeting.** The next meeting will be held on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Cllr Ms Drury gave her apologies.

Signed:  
Chair

Date:

