

WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

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The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 20th June 2023 at 7.30pm in the Committee Room, at West Buckland Village Hall.

Present: Cllr's C Silverlight (Chair), Ms S Drury, S Bellamy, J Nutt and A Paul.

In attendance: Cllr R Henley, Somerset Council, and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

17/06/23. To receive apologies for absence. Apologies were received from Cllr S Wakefield, Somerset Council.

18/06/23. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda. Cllr Bellamy declared a personal interest in planning application 46/23/0006 as the applicant is a friend of his wife. Cllr Ms Drury declared a personal and prejudicial interest in her expenses claim under item 26/06/23 a).

19/06/23. To agree the minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 30/05/23 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.

20/06/23. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda (for information only). No matters arising.

21/06/23. Democratic Period. No members of the public present.

22/06/23. Update on broadband issues. Cllr Ms Drury, Cllr S Wakefield and the Clerk met with Matt Barrow on Teams on 19th June. Cllr Ms Drury had difficulties joining the meeting because of poor broadband and no mobile signal. When she eventually managed to join the meeting she could only listen to what was being said and was unable to see the maps that were being shown. Airband are confident that they have located all the properties on the area now and are confident they are on the right track now. In about a month or so they will be able to report on the very hard to reach properties. What has not been surveyed will be and they will be able to look at options for the hard to reach properties. There is a voucher scheme which allocates £4500 per property which might be able to be used for these very hard to reach properties. with the discretion to add a bit more if necessary. While Starlink satellite broadband is being pushed at the moment it is not the answer because as more people in an area join the speeds get worse. Airband is currently installing superfast broadband but that is coming to an end and will be replaced by Gigabit

broadband. Properties that don't get superfast broadband will be a priority for Gigabit broadband but that will be in 5 years' time. Cllr Ms Drury said the present scheme was flawed from the start because they didn't use the phone numbers from the exchanges. Pitminster was in a voucher scheme but have now got a self set up scheme and the money from that scheme has gone back into the pot. We are not alone, this is just repeating the issues found in a number of rural communities. The way the Connecting Devon and Somerset scheme was drawn up was flawed and not open to scrutiny. They didn't want to engage and there was a lack of openness. Matt Barrow has promised to contact Cllr Ms Drury in a month and if he doesn't she will email him in 6 weeks. She has asked him not to ignore her emails to him. Cllr Henley will also have a briefing from him. Amanda Williams is the person at SC who can be contacted if there are concerns. SC is aware of the lack of 4G in the area and they are just starting to take that on board and look at it. Cllr Nutt will find out what is happening about the lack of 4G in Bedfordshire.

23/06/23. Somerset Council Report. Cllr Henley reported that he had visited West Buckland Primary School and looked at their school meals. Meals cost £2.80 each and there is nearly 100% take up of free school meals. They are just about to change providers and meals will be provided by one of the primary schools in Wellington. There will be a drop in the number of children on roll in September. Even though the school is part of a multi academy trust some services such as admissions are still provided by SC and Cllr Henley likes to keep in touch with the schools in his ward. He is trying to stop Lloyds Bank in Wellington being closed before the banking hub opens. Hatch Beauchamp Parish Council is about to trial providing a weekly bus service to Taunton for 3 months. The aim is to provide evidence of need to SC. The service will be funded by the Parish Council with the cost being partially offset by bus fares. The £2 cap on bus fares is being extended until October. From then until October 2024 fares will be capped at £2.60. Cllr Henley will try to find out what a similar scheme would cost for West Buckland with the support of the Parish Council. Cllr Ms Drury said she would still like to see a bus service into West Buckland being pushed.

Cllr Henley left the meeting at 7.52pm.

24/06/23. Planning:

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

Cllr Bellamy declared a personal interest in application 46/23/0006 and by his own choice, left the room while the application was discussed.

Prior to the meeting the Clerk had received an email containing a representation raising concerns about the application and a request that this was read out at the meeting. The email had been circulated to councillors and because they had all read the representation it wasn't felt necessary to read it out.

46/23/0006 Formation of sand school with d of building for jump storage and associated works at Moonview, Calways Lane, West Buckland.

Comment: West Buckland Parish Council do not feel they can comment on this application at this stage due to the lack of clarity and detail in many areas of the submitted plans. For example there are no dimensions for the building or details of the materials to be used for the sand school or about drainage. The biodiversity report is particularly poorly evidenced. The Council would like to receive more detailed plans so that it can make a comment.

Planning Enforcement will be written to regarding enforcement matters raised with them previously with no satisfactory outcome.

b) To receive decisions from planning applications determined by Somerset Council. No decisions received.

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

25/06/23. Highways.

a) To note any required work to be reported to SC. The surface of Calways Lane has been patched. The hole in the road by the West Buckland signpost at the top of Buckland Hill which has gradually been getting worse is now marked up for repair. Cllr Nutt has reported a broken manhole cover on the motorway bridge and has asked for this to be repaired urgently. School House, beside the school, has an overgrown Laurel hedge which is obstructing the highway in a narrow lane. SC will be asked to contact the owner of the property and ask them to cut the hedge back. There is a potential for the culvert under the road in Silver Street to become blocked because the stream is overgrown.

b) To receive an update on outstanding highways work (Kerb at Dyers Close and drainage in Silver Street). No update. This will be kept on the agenda.

c) Update on repairs to fingerpost sign on Buckland Hill. The damaged arm has still not been replaced. The Clerk has emailed Kate Brown to ask when this will be done.

d) Any other highways matters. The Clerk had received an email from the owners of the Blackbird Inn Bed & Breakfast who are concerned about the speed at which cars, lorries and buses go round the bend opposite Willowbrook Garden Centre, estimated to be in excess of 40mph, before increasing their speed further once they are around the bend. They feel this is extremely dangerous as they have car parking adjoining their property. They have contacted Traffic Management, Somerset Council, and asked for signs saying slow down and concealed entrance to be erected before the bend towards Taunton. SC has advised they cannot be erected on the highway as they are unauthorised signs and SC as the Highway Authority does not allow the use of non-prescribed sign as special permission must be given by the Department of Transport for their use. However, if positioned on private land then it is not a matter for SC although there may be a planning issue, which will need to be discussed with the Parish Council. Any new traffic management requests, including additional signage, must have the support of the parish council. The owners have asked for the Parish Council's support to get signage put in place and the speed limit reduced further to 30mph and enforced. While councillors share the concerns regarding the A38 there isn't any collision data that would support a request for a further reduction of the speed limit to 30mph or signage. The Parish Council isn't the planning authority and any application for planning permission for signs to be erected on private land would must be made to the planning authority, SC.

26/06/23. Finance:

a) To agree and authorise any payments.

It was resolved to make the following payments:

Cllr Ms Drury declared a personal and prejudicial interest in her expense claim and was not involved in the agreement of the payment.

Cllr S Drury - £5.00 repayment for plastic pegs for goal nets purchased at Halfords (Payment ref: 2324/12)

Mrs J Larcombe - £321.94 Clerk's salary and expenses for June (Payment ref: 2324/13)

H M Revenue & Customs - £18.80 PAYE for June (Payment ref: 2324/14)

D Greenslade Landscape Gardener - £5,369.77 balance of payment for replacement of swings (Payment ref: 2324/15). Cllr Silverlight and Cllr Ms Drury will check the swings before this is paid.

Since the last meeting a payment of £130.74 has been made to the Community Heartbeat Trust for new pads for the defibrillator (Payment ref: 2324/10) and £1,665.18 to D Greenslade Landscape Gardener for the balance for the kick wall (Payment ref: 2323/11)

Before the end of the month an invoice will be received from Mr N Richards for grass cutting and vegetation clearance on footpaths and it was agreed this invoice could be paid when it was received. The payment will be reported to the July meeting.

A transfer will be made from the Instant Access Account to the Current Account to bring the balance back to £1,000.00.

b) To note any receipts since the last meeting and the bank account balances.

Since the last meeting there have been no receipts.

The current account balance is £1,000 and the Instant Access Account balance is £26,143.30.

c) To receive the report from the Internal Auditor for 2022-23. Carried forward.

d) To agree the Annual Governance Statement for 2022-23. Councillors agreed yes to statements 1 – 8 and not applicable to statement 9 on the Annual Governance Statement.

e) To agree the Accounting Statement for 2022-23. Councillors agreed the accounting statement as certified by the RFO.

f) To agree to sign the Certificate of Exemption for 2022-23. The Council agreed that it wished to certify itself as exempt from a limited assurance review under Section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015 and the Certificate of Exemption was signed.

27/06/23. Playing Field:

a) Any points to note from the regular inspections. No points to note.

A request had been received from a member of staff from Cave Veterinary Specialists for permission to use the playing field for a staff game of rounders. Permission was agreed.

A request had also been received to use the playing field for parking on July 1st when a large number of people were expected to attend a funeral at the Church. Permission was agreed and they will be asked to park cars in the agreed parking area. Cllr Bellamy has produced a map showing the parking area and this will be added to the Playing Field Policy.

There have been positive comments about the new kick wall on the village Facebook page.

b) Update on outstanding repairs from the annual inspection. The pedestrian gate to the play area is still closing too quickly and Darren Greenslade is unable to correct this. The company that installed the gates will be contacted.

c) Update on installation of new swings. The old swings and surfacing have been removed and the new swings installed. They are still fenced off while the concrete sets and the grass under the safety matting takes.

- 28/06/23. To discuss the charges for the EV charging point.** The Clerk recommended that a written agreement needs to be drawn up between the Parish Council and the Village Hall committee regarding the ownership and management of the EV charging point. In order to agree what the charge for using it should be councillors need to know what the village hall committee are being charged for electricity by their supplier. The charging cost should be reviewed at least annually. Signage is needed and it was agreed that could be purchased.
- 29/06/23. Footpaths: any footpath matters.** The Clerk has received emails reporting overgrown vegetation on some of the footpaths in the parish. On Friday vegetation will be cut back on the footpaths that the Parish Council keeps cut back. Somerset Council has replaced 'furniture' on footpath
- 30/06/23. Correspondence.** The following correspondence was noted:
Amy Green, Development Enabling Specialist Somerset Council, has emailed the Clerk to introduce herself and explain that she is focused on enabling affordable housing in the rural areas of what was the Somerset West and Taunton area, now Somerset West. She is in the process of working with a few parishes in the region to understand the present housing need. According to Homefinder Somerset, there are 23 registered applicants seeking rented accommodation who have expressed a local connection to West Buckland parish. She would like to attend a meeting to discuss further.
- 31/06/23. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion (Not for Decisions).** There was no urgent business.
- 32/06/23. To agree the date of the next meeting.** The next meeting will be on 25th July 2023.

Signed:
Chair

Date: