

WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

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The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 27th February 2024 at 7.30pm in the Main Hall, at West Buckland Village Hall.

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

In attendance: Somerset Cllr's R Henley and S Wakefield, 3 members of the public and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe

153/02/24. To receive apologies for absence. Apologies were accepted from Cllr Mrs Moore.

154/02/24. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda. None.

155/02/24. Matt Barrow, Stakeholder Engagement Officer Connecting Devon & Somerset to discuss broadband issues in the parish. The Clerk reported that Mr Barrow had agreed by email to attend this meeting. She had emailed Mr Barrow on Friday 23rd February to check whether he would be attending this meeting but he had not replied. She sent another email to him early this morning and he replied that he wouldn't be able to attend – perhaps next month. A number of West Buckland parishioners were planning to attend the meeting because of the problems they are experiencing with broadband. Councillors agreed that this behaviour was very unprofessional. He is a Devon County Council employee but is extremely difficult to get information from, fails to reply to emails sent to him and fails to contact people when he has told them he will. Cllr Ms Drury confirmed that he never replies to her emails. She has been trying to resolve problems with poor broadband speeds in Ruggin since May 2021. In the 2 years 4 months since she started talking to Matt Barrow it has just gone backwards.

The Standing Orders were suspended to allow the members of the public to speak.

A member of the public said he had attended a meeting on Teams which Airband had arranged. Timescales for their roll out of this superfast broadband programme in the West Buckland area were given during the meeting. The build programme, funded by the government, is not being completed to the given timescale. He was told it would start in his area at the start of February and be finished by the end of February but work has not even started. Properties that are

situated by the side of the road will eventually be connected but hard to reach and very hard to reach are likely to lose their service.

There are rumours that Airband are in some difficulties as a result of high inflation. Cllr Wakefield will speak to the digital director at Somerset Council. Last month alterations were made to the 4G mast to improve the service to Wellington but this was at a detriment to Ruggin.

Cllr Bellamy reminded Cllr Henley that as chair of the Local Community Network Group he had asked for suggestions for speakers and suggested that Matt Barrow is invited. Noting the amount of government funding that CDS has received for this initiative it is important they are held to account for non-delivery. Cllr Silverlight has written to Rebecca Pow MP to ask why this isn't happening. She has answered that she will let him know when she has a reply.

Unable to even improve her 4G service Cllr Ms Drury's only option would be Starlink. There have been some offers from Starlink to supply a mast and aerial for £250 instead of £500 and this satellite service is nearly 3 times more expensive monthly than a service supplied by cable. She has already lost 2 jobs because of a poor broadband service. This will also affect property prices. In Lower Ruggin there is no 4G service at all.

Cllr Wilson asked what the technological way forward was – either fibre cable or Onestream.

Cllr Henley suggested bringing in Cllr Graham Long from Otterford Parish Council and the Blackdown Hill Parish Network as he been all over this since the start.

Cllr Ms Drury is concerned that BT Openreach could turn off copper in 2025 and Ruggin will be left with no service at all.

Standing Orders were resumed.

It was agreed that the Parish Council would make a formal complaint about the behaviour of Matt Barrow.

157/02/24. To agree the minutes of the meetings held on 30/01/24 as accurate records of the meetings. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and they were duly signed by the Chair.

158/02/24. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda (for information only). None.

159/02/24. Reports.

a) Somerset Council Report. Cllr Henley reported 43/23/0018 Application for Outline Planning with all matters reserved, except for access, for the erection of 12 No. dwellings (25% affordable) on land at Silver Street, West Buckland has been refused permission by the Planning Officer. One of the reasons for refusal is that it is outside of the settlement limit. The applicant has 6 weeks to submit an appeal but if they do it will be robustly defended by Somerset Council.

Cllr Henley has been looking at how First Bus can divert a service through West Buckland. Save our Buses is happy to work with him. Bus routes in Somerset have been set for a long time and need looking at as they are not always what people need. SC's discussions with the bus companies were reported to be tortuous and difficult. Cllr Henley and Cllr Wakefield will run a survey in the spring to find out what people need.

SC has set its budget for 2024-25 and a lot of the worst concerns have been ameliorated. CCTV is being retained. It was noted that a lot of rural parishes don't have CCTV or public toilets.

Cllr Wakefield is now the SC Lead Member for adult services. There has been a £60million increase for adult social care. 95% of the budget is spent on wages, which have increased. People want to stay in their homes and be cared for and care homes have vacancies. They need to be 85% full to be viable.

160/02/24. Democratic period. A member of the public reported problems with people driving fast on Sawyers Hill and Crown Hill. The 30 mph repeater signs are buried in the hedge. The Parish Council has asked previously for them to be made more visible and for markings to be put on the road. Cllr Henley suggested getting Kate Brown on site to have a look to see if anything could be done to help. The Clerk will enquire about speed indication devices (SIDs).

159/02/24. b) LCN Report from Cllr Bellamy. There was a presentation on the Highway Steward Scheme which would allow one or more Councils to work together to resolve local Highways issues above and beyond the statutory highways work. Councillors commented that they did not understand this as they were expecting this to be a cost saving scheme. It was explained that savings were costed in as for example the clearing of gullies every 4 years will not be done and there will be no 2nd grass cutting in a given year.

- Town & Parish Councils that choose to opt into a scheme would have input/approval of "works".
- Statutory work eg potholes are out of scope. Cleaning of fingerposts and signs can be part of the stewardship.
- The cost per stewardship is about £50k for about 220 days work but could be shared with a neighbouring parish rather like a lengthsman scheme.
- Lots of work that the parishes could do are up for discussion with "highways".
- We could for example opt out of joining a scheme but "buy in" to a scheme that is running eg Wellington Town Council may be running a scheme and if we did want some "work" done we could go through them and pay for an agreed amount of days' work as required, in some cases the Highways department would handle that work itself so as to get the right contractor in to do the work/job. A statement of Requirement could be passed through the Stewardship scheme for a costed option.
- Highways Planning Committee to start to group interested parish and town councils. We do not have to be part of a scheme at the beginning and can decide to join later in the year if we wish.

Public Transport/Community Transport will become the second working group of this LCN, in addition to the Highways working group agreed at the previous meeting.

Assets and services devolution: Wellington Council is picking up all things that SC will not be funding in the future eg toilets. For smaller parishes like West Buckland, there is not too much more we can do with our budget. We do some finger post work for example. The following points were made:

Several other parishes are already doing good work such as litter collection and other community groups are working on environmental issues.

Better statistics regarding gully clearing etc could be made more available to

councils to help drive local maintenance.

It was also pointed out that losing the 2nd grass verge cut could be viewed as good for biodiversity!

Bigger Parish Councils may need to prioritise and take up work that is not funded by SC and that eg Town Councils may need to formalise other voluntary and community work.

Many small parish councils like West Buckland Council are caring and supporting local issues eg dog waste bins, EV charging, playing fields, planting of trees and Finger Post maintenance all within budget.

Suggestions were requested for a guest speaker – How about broadband?

The next 2 meetings will be held on 18th April and 11th July

160/02/24. Planning:

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

46/24/0003/LEW Application for a for a Lawful Development Certificate for the existing use of garage as a workshop (Class E g (iii)) for the production of kit cars at 2 Ivy Cottages, Haywards Road, West Buckland. This application was noted.

46/24/0004 Change of use of land from residential to storage (Class B8 use) with siting of storage containers at Llantarnam, Nursery Lane, West Buckland (retention of part works already undertaken). Comment: no objections.

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

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 as amended by agents email of 5th March 2021 and Drg Nos 7720:00B Location Plan, 7720:01B Block Plan, Site Layout as existing, 7720:02D Block Plan, site layout as proposed 7720:03E, Floor Plans, Elevations, Block Plan. Decision: conditional approval granted.

46/23/0012/CLA Notification for prior approval for the installation of 1 No. 25 metre high lattice mast with 6 No. antenna and 2 No. 600mm dishes, ground based equipment cabinets and associated ancillary development thereto on land at Manley Farm, off Gerbestone Lane, West Buckland. Decision: Prior approval approved (Conditional).

46/23/0014/T Application to carry out management works to 10 oak trees, 8 beech trees, one willow and a group of young beech trees (within hedgerow G4) included in Taunton Deane Borough (West Buckland No.2) Tree Preservation Order 2022 on land to the west of Meadows, Chelston Heathfield, Wellington Road, West Buckland (SWT69). Decision: conditional approval granted.

46/23/0020CQ Prior approval for proposed change of use from agricultural building to dwelling house (Class C3) and associated building operations to the barn at Huntspath Farm, Blackmoor, West Buckland. Decision: Prior approval approved.

46/24/0002/AGN Application to determine if prior approval is required for excavations or deposits of waste material reasonably necessary to create a wetland on agricultural field south and east of Park Lane, Hockholler. Decision: No objection.

c) Any other planning matters. None.

161/02/24. To report on arrangements for the West Buckland Housing Needs Survey by Somerset Council. A letter will be going out by post tomorrow to 487 households across the West Buckland parish inviting them to take part in the Parish Housing Needs Survey. The consultation will go live on the 4th March and run through to the 14th April.

Printed copies of the survey will be distributed to the following locations:

- West Buckland Community Primary School
- West Buckland Village Hall
- Piccadilly Service Station
- Blackdown Garden Centre (Customer Service till)

162/02/24. Highways.

a) To note any required work to be reported to SC. Potholes on Gerbestone Lane have been repaired. Blackmoor residents have contacted Cllr Silverlight because drains on the hill are not working, particularly outside of Greenside. The impact of increased rainfall is that water erupts outside of Perry Barn. The Clerk advised that if residents report the problem online they will be given a reference number which can be used to chase up SC if the problem continues.

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

c) Any other highways matters. The fence at the top of Buckland Hill has been repaired and the rubbish has been taken away. Thanks were given to Forestry England.

After an extended period of rain the river at the bottom of Sawyers Hill flooded despite the work carried out towards the end of 2023. This was noted for now.

163/02/24. Finance:

a) To agree and authorise any payments. It was resolved to make the following payments.: D Greenslade Landscape Gardener - £180.00 supply and fit gate closer to play area pedestrian gate (Payment ref: 2324/50).

Mrs J Larcombe - £340.64 Clerk's salary February 2024 (Payment ref: 2324/51)

H M Revenue & Customs - £23.60 PAYE for February 2024 (Payment ref: 2324/52)

A transfer will be 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 account balance. Since the last meeting a payment of £70.18 has been received from Hydra EVC Ltd. The Current account balance is £1,070.18 and the Instant Access account balance is £17,406.72

c) To receive a quote from Somerset Council for the emptying of the dog bin for 2024-25. A quote of £7.82 per collection to empty the dog bin at Stoford Lane once per week. The quote will be accepted. No one else is offering this service.

d) To receive quotes for cutting the playing field grass for 2024. A quote has been received from SC and a quote is due from Countrywide Grounds Maintenance. Countrywide Grounds Maintenance has not carried out work for the Parish Council before but the Clerk has received good reports of their service from another customer. They have supplied a copy of their public liability insurance. It was agreed to accept their quote if it is cheaper than SC.

e) Annual Review of the Business Risk Assessment. An updated business

risk assessment had been circulated by the Clerk. It was approved.

f) Annual Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Controls and Internal Audit. The document circulated by the Clerk was approved.

g) Appointment of Internal Auditor. It was agreed to appoint Karen Ward.

h) To agree additional signatories. It was agreed to add Simon Bellamy and Mark Wilson as signatories.

164/02/24. Playing Field:

a) Any points to note from the regular inspection. No report. Cllr Bellamy will carry out the playground checks if Cllr Nutt is unable to do this. The Clerk will order a high-viz waistcoat for him so that people know he is carrying out the checks on behalf of the Parish Council.

b) Update on repairs to self-closing gates. A gate closer has been fitted.

c) Any other playing field matters. A new apple tree has been donated by Wee Tree Nurseries to replace the tree at the bottom of the playing field that died. Cllr Paul has pruned the fruit trees. A bigger padlock might be needed for the gate on the vehicular entrance.

Cllr Bellamy will carry out the regular inspections if Cllr Nutt is unable to do so. The Clerk will order him a hi-viz waistcoat with West Buckland Parish Council on it.

165/02/24. Any footpath matters. Footpaths are wet and slippery because of the continually wet weather.

166/02/24. Correspondence. There was no further correspondence.

167/02/24. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion (Not for Decisions). No urgent business.

168/02/24. To note the date of the next meeting. The next meeting will be on 26th March 2024.

Signed:
Chair

Date: