

## WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

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**The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 26th November 2024 at 7.30pm in the Committee Room, at West Buckland Village Hall.**

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

**In attendance:** Somerset Councillor R Henley, 4 members of the public and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

**79/11/24. To receive apologies for absence.** Apologies were received from Somerset Councillor S Wakefield.

**80/11/24. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda.** No disclosure of interests.

**81/11/24. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 29/10/24 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.

**82/11/24. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda (for information only).** No matters arising.

**83/11/24. To continue to discuss broadband issues in the parish.** Cllr Ms Drury has been contacted by a parishioner who has been unable to renew their broadband contract with EE because it is provided via a BT copper line. The only other provider who would offer them a contract was BT who offered a contract that was 30% more expensive. A message has been put on the Parish Council Facebook page and the Village Facebook page to make parishioners aware of the issue and suggesting they check if their current supplier will renew their contract when it ends. There are far more properties in the parish still on copper wire than was previously thought and worryingly the deadline for the switch to full fibre is still planned as December 2025. If broadband is supplied via fibre to the cabinet there is still a copper connection from the cabinet to the property. The further from the cabinet a property is the slower the broadband speed and there are already some properties who cannot access broadband. A line has been drawn under Airband's contract with Connecting Devon and Somerset and a whole list of parishes are not getting the service they were promised years ago. Gideon Amos MP raised the issue in parliament recently and he will be meeting with the Telecoms Minister, Sir Chris Bryant MP. It is reaching a tipping point now as in this day and age it is very difficult to live without access

to the internet. Cllr Henley will contact Gideon Amos MP about the December 2025 deadline and he will also see what he can do within Somerset Council. Councillors noted the previous MP was not responding to emails about this issue. Cllr Bellamy highlighted the effect it will have on people's mental health if the switch to full fibre happens in December 2025 and they are still on a copper connection.

It was noted that other areas in the country are far more advanced than Somerset in the roll out of full fibre broadband.

**84/11/24. Democratic Period.** A resident who has lived in Cob Castle, Ham for seventeen years said she has contacted Somerset Council to ask for streetlights to be installed on the path from the A38 to Ham. At this time of the year it is often very dark when residents are walking to and from public transport on the A38. The hedges along the route are also much higher now than when she moved to Ham. Somerset Council has suggested she contacts the Parish Council. Cllr Henley agreed to visit the resident and the Clerk will forward her emails and photos. The Parish Council will support a request for street lighting. Other residents in the Ham area would have to be consulted before it was agreed to install street lighting.

The resident left the meeting.

Lee Park residents are having problems with broadband. Cllr Silverlight encouraged them to email Gideon Amos MP.

A resident reported that traffic is still speeding through the village and it is worse at school times. When parents are dropping off or collecting their children from the primary school some park over the 20 mph road markings. It was alleged that vehicles belonging to Thomas Brothers, a local company, are speeding through the village and frightening people. Cllr Paul offered to speak to the business owner.

There was a request for the white lines at the top of Crown Hill to be replaced because people are parking vehicles there. Following the Parish Council's meeting with Kate Brown, SC Traffic Management Officer, there are still various road markings to be replaced. 30 mph signs will be painted on the road. The white line is there to show people they shouldn't park there but if they do there is nothing that can be done. The Clerk was asked to contact PCSO Bramley and ask if he could visit the village and ticket people who are parking illegally. Something will also be put on the Facebook page reminding people of the Highway Code. The Clerk will also email Cameron Mann, Headteacher of the Primary School, to ask if he could put something in the school newsletter and on their website to remind parents/carers about parking properly at school times.

Cllr Henley noted the Parish Council has decided to go down the Speed Indicator Device (SID) route as the first step in trying to address the problem of speeding in the village but his opinion is that the Parish Council will have to go down the 20 mph speed limit route. The installation of SIDs will give evidence of the speed of traffic through the village. It was explained to the members of the public that the Parish Council would need to fund a 20mph speed limit and the likely cost is £12,000 to £14,000 because of the rules and regulations that have to be followed.

## **85/11/24. Reports**

**a) Somerset Council.** Cllr Henley reported that he and Cllr Wakefield have been approached about Somerset Council wanting to sell three empty council houses in

their ward, one of which is in West Buckland. All three properties have had very long standing tenants who have refused to have new bathroom and kitchens fitted during their tenancies resulting in a huge backlog of work being required to the properties before they are in the required condition to let again. Somerset Council considers the cost is not in the public interest but Cllr Henley does not agree. The recent West Buckland Housing Needs Survey (HNS) shows there is a housing need in the parish and of the three properties the one in West Buckland has the strongest case because of this. Cllr Henley will call this in and the Parish Council agreed their support. It was agreed that if required Cllr Henley would supply the details for the Clerk to write a letter to Somerset Council to inform them the Parish Council in principle support the retention of the property in West Buckland because of the housing need identified by the HNS.

Cllr Henley left the meeting.

**b) Somerset Parishes Conference.** No one attended.

**c) Any other reports.** Cllr Bellamy reported he had attended a Somerset Council online presentation and training session of one.network - a UK-wide map of current, planned and historical roadworks, events and traffic management interventions, for Somerset Unitary, Town, City & Parish (CTP) Councillors and Clerks which he had found very useful. Information is uploaded to Google Maps.

#### **86/11/24. Planning:**

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

**46/24/0012.** Variation of Condition No's 2 (approved plans) and 4 (to extend the time to complete the road widening) of application 46/12/0007 at Blackdown Garden Centre, Wellington Road, West Buckland. Councillors noted the current owners are now engaging and arranging to do the required work.

Comment: West Buckland Parish Council note the application and look forward to the conclusion of the work.

**43/24/0105** Application for the approval of reserved matters following outline application 43/23/0056 for the appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for the station square including hard and soft landscaping, mobility hub and siting of the Wellington Monument pyramidion on land north of Taunton Road, Longforth Park, Wellington. Comment: noted.

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

**c) Local Validation Checklist Consultation (11<sup>th</sup> November 2024 – 10<sup>th</sup> January 2025).** Noted. The checklist is for people making a planning application to go through before they submit an application. Cllr Silverlight said it was very comprehensive.

**d) Any other planning matters.** None.

#### **87/11/24. Highways.**

**a) To note any required work to be reported to SC.** It was noted that there is still some outstanding replacement of road markings as agreed with Kate Brown. The Clerk will email her to find out if this is still going to be done before the end of the financial year.

It is secondary age children attending after school clubs or anything outside of normal school hours that have to walk back to the village from the bus stop near

the Worlds End.

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

**c) To discuss the updated advice received from Kate Brown on SIDs and possible sites.** The Clerk will circulate the updated advice. Councillors felt two or three will be required but they can only be used in one position for a maximum of two weeks and cannot return to that position for six weeks.

Councillors will try to meet before the next meeting to look at suitable sites. Cllr Bellamy offered to put the suggested sites on a map.

**d) Request for streetlights at Ham.** Already covered under item 84/11/24.

**e) Any other highways matters.** Blocked drains on the Chelston Link Road are causing flooding and in the dark this is dangerous. This has been reported a lot but nothing has been done. Cllr Henley and Cllr Wakefield to be asked to follow this up.

#### **88/11/24. Finance.**

**a) To agree and authorise any payments.** It was resolved to make the following payments:

Mrs J Larcombe - £365.86. Clerk's salary for November and expenses (Payment ref: 2425/46)

HM Revenue & Customs - £40.60. PAYE for November (Payment ref: 2425/47)

Countrywide Grounds Maintenance - £135.17. Monthly charge for playing field grass cutting (Payment ref: 2425/48)

Cllr Ms S Drury - £10.80 mileage claim (Payment ref: 2425/49).

Councillors agreed not to pay an invoice of £132.34 from West Buckland Village Hall Trust for electricity used by the EV Charging Point at this point as they wanted clarification of the amount that the Village Hall Trust are being charged for electricity. Information on the amount of electricity generated by the solar panels in that period will also be requested.

Since the last meeting a payment a bank service charge of £5.40 was paid from the account on 31<sup>st</sup> October.

As there is no meeting in December it is agreed that the Clerk's salary and the invoice from Countrywide will be paid at the end of December.

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 accounts balances.** Since the last meeting £6.27 has been received from Nexus, income from the EV Charging Point.

The current account balance is £1,006.87 and the Instant Access Account balance is £22,331.98

**c) To discuss the budget for 2025-26.** A spreadsheet was circulated for discussion. Councillors were asked to contact the Clerk if they had any anything to be added for discussion. The budget will be discussed again at the next meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and the precept agreed.

**d) Bank reconciliation 31.10.24.** To be checked at the next meeting.

#### **89/11/24. Playing Field:**

**a) Any points to note from the regular inspections.** The mechanism of the roundabout needs greasing.

**b) Update on the cleaning of the surfacing around the roundabout.** The

surfacing around the roundabout was sprayed with Wet and Forget as agreed. Following the spraying Cllr Bellamy scrubbed that surfacing and the surfacing around the springies. It will be cleaned again in the spring. Cllr Bellamy was thanked for doing this.

**c) Any other playing field matters.** The Clerk has been investigating options for replacing the pedestrian gate into the play area.

**90/11/24. Footpaths: any footpath matters.** None.

**91/11/24. To discuss issues faced by parishioners when they no longer have transport and are unable to walk to the bus.** Cllr Ms Drury reported that she had been alerted to this issue by a friend who had had a conversation with an elderly resident whose husband has given up driving. This couple now feel trapped in the village and their world has got very small. They would like to stay in the village but feel they might be forced to move because of the isolation. Cllr Ms Drury emailed the Village Agent for West Buckland on 16<sup>th</sup> November but hasn't had a reply. Cllr Bellamy is meeting online with Mark Shields next Friday. Cllr Mrs Moore will look into what support might be possible.

**92/11/24. Correspondence.** There was no further correspondence. Cllr Ms Drury reported she has received training on how to use the thermal imaging camera which it is planned to borrow from the Blackdown Hills Parish Network in late February/early March. It has to be used in the late evening when a house is well heated and the outside temperature is below 6 degrees Celsius. Once the final dates for borrowing the camera are known the opportunity to have your property checked will be publicised on Facebook. It will be made clear the Parish Council are not energy advisors and that advice should be sourced elsewhere. The camera will need to be added to the Parish Council's insurance during the period it is on loan.

**93/11/24. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion (Not for Decisions).** There is new legislation about advertising the charges for using the EV Charging Point and these will need to be displayed beside it. A waterproof frame for this purpose has been purchased (included in the Clerk's expenses) and permission will be obtained from the Village Hall Committee to fix it to the wall beside the charger.

**94/11/24. To note the date of the next meeting.** The next meeting will be held on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

Signed:  
Chair

Date: