

WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 25th February 2025 at 7.30pm in the Committee Room, at West Buckland Village Hall.

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

In attendance: Somerset Councillors R Henley & S Wakefield, 4 members of the public and the Clerk, Mrs J Larombe.

111/02/25. To receive apologies for absence. Apologies were accepted from Cllr Mrs B Moore.

112/02/25. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda. No disclosures.

113/02/25. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 07/01/25 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.

114/02/25. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda (for information only). None.

115/02/25. To continue to discuss broadband issues in the parish. No update.

116/02/25. Democratic Period. A member of the public asked if the Parish Council would be taking over the maintenance of open space in West Buckland. Cllr Wakefield explained that some Town and Parish Councils have taken over areas of open space but West Buckland Parish Council have not been asked to take over the areas at Lee Park and Ham. Somerset Council has said they will continue to maintain these areas. Cllr Henley will check that they will. Lee Park residents feel they are paying through their council tax for this work to be done but are concerned about how much and how well this is being done. Trees are growing over the play area. Cllr Wakefield suggested Lee Park tenants could have a conversation with Somerset Council about a reduction in council tax if they pay to have the grass cut. There was a suggestion they could cut it themselves but they would have to consider health & safety. Fly tipping was reported in the small alleyway by Lee Park.

It was agreed to bring forward the item on fly tipping.

120/02/25 e) To discuss recent fly tipping incidents. A resident has cleared a considerable amount of litter on Buckland Hill. There has also been fly tipping on Buckland Farm Road. Another resident saw someone dumping rubbish out of the back of a van near the service station. Cllr Silverlight reported this and it was cleared up but he didn't receive any feedback. Cllr Wakefield noted that Somerset Council have a lot of recycling centres and they were looking at reducing them, which would have caused more fly tipping. You have to pay if you take a van to a recycling centre. Fly tipping/littering is a big problem. If the litter is on the side of a highway Somerset Council will remove it but not from private land. There is a lot of litter on the slip roads on and off the motorway and this is the responsibility of National Highways.

Two members of the public left the meeting.

117/02/25. Ham Stream Flood Group – to receive an update on making an application for funding to the Community Flood Action Fund (CFAF) set up by the Somerset Rivers Authority. To discuss possible funding from the Parish Council to support the application. Standing Orders were stood down to allow the members of the Ham Stream Maintenance Group to be included in the discussion on this item.

Cllr Silverlight explained the scheme to prevent flooding along Asham Lane, Ham to Cllr Henley and Cllr Wakefield. Since the last parish council meeting Cllr Silverlight and Cllr Ms Drury have attended a site meeting with members of the group and Hugo Van Dorssen, Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), and Bel Deering, Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA). Three quotes for the work have been obtained. Gwyn Hughes, Somerset Highways, has agreed to clean the blocked culverts if the application for funding is successful. The application will be made in the name of the Parish Council and £3,100 will be requested. It was agreed that the Parish Council would pay the balance. If the grant application is successful it was agreed that the quote from Five Farmers would be accepted. The application form had been completed ready for submission with just the funding details to add. The Clerk agreed to complete the application following the meeting and submit it to meet the 25th February deadline. Standing Orders were resumed.

The members of the Ham Stream Maintenance Group left the meeting.

118/02/25. Reports

a) Somerset Council. Cllr Wakefield's written report was circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr Henley said he would chase up the request for street lighting at Ham. He is chairing a committee at Somerset Council about the review of the boundary and electoral arrangements in Somerset. There has been a lot of discussion about where West Buckland should go. The Blackdown Hills, Wellington or Milverton and Wiveliscombe were all suggested. there will be clarity soon. Cllr Henley and Cllr Wakefield have been talking to Cllr Rigby as the trigger point in the Orchard Grove development S106 agreement has been reached where improvements have to be made to the A38 junction at the Worlds End. They have asked for plans and will be speaking to the named officer on 26th March. They have not heard anything about the empty property in West Buckland but officers are saying that it will be too expensive to bring up to an acceptable standard for reletting. They will keep pressing for it to be repaired, particularly as Somerset Council funded the Housing Needs Survey which identified a housing need in West Buckland.

Executive will be considering the budget on Monday 3rd March and Council on Wednesday 5th March and a very difficult decision will have to be made, Adult Social Care and Children's Care take most of the money (£239million this year). Forty councils applied to be allowed to increase their council tax above the cap but only 8 were given permission. Somerset Council are allowed a 7.5% increase. Cllr Wakefield gave her apologies for the next meeting.

The notes from the Highway Group working party meeting will be circulated.

Cllr Henley left the meeting.

b) Wellington & Wiveliscombe Local Community Network. Notes from the meeting had been circulated. There was a presentation on the new Somerset Council Local Plan and the Call for Sites. It is difficult to fight against development because the Government want more housing.

The LCN's are being reviewed because they are not all working well. Cllr Wakefield felt Somerset Council should look at a geographical fit and where people want to be part of.

c) Cllr Bellamy to report on meeting with Village Agent regarding support to enable older residents to remain living in the parish. Cllr Bellamy met with Jackie Young, the Village Agent for Wellington, in mid January. Following their discussion on whether there was a need in West Buckland and what was that need it was decided there was no urgent action needed. The Village Agent reported that there was no need that she knew of. Cllr Bellamy will act as a link with the Village Agent. A coffee and cake hub with young people was the only project they could work on together. Micro providers are the only option for older people but they cost £20 per hour. The Village Agent is one way into social care for the elderly who need help. If they qualify, they will get help or a payment for care. The Church in West Buckland did get a grant to provide tea and coffee etc and an opportunity to socialise but they are not doing this any longer. Cllr Mrs Moore is looking at how the Parish Council could help elderly residents and there will be an item on the next agenda.

d) Any other reports. No other reports.

119/02/25. Planning:

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

46/25/0006 Proposal: Erection of a single storey extension to the front of 3 Frogs Lane, West Buckland. The application was noted. No comment.

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

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. Decision: conditional approval granted.

c) To discuss the Local Government Boundary Commission for England – review of the boundary and electoral arrangements in Somerset (deadline extended to 04.03.25). The parish Council's preference is to be aligned with the needs of the parish and this could be either the Blackdown Hills or Wellington.

d) Any other planning matters. Alebar Farm is advertising camping and glamping on their website but they have not applied for a change of use. Planning Enforcement will be notified. Cllr Bellamy declared a personal interest as he knows the owners.

120/02/25. Highways.

a) To note any required work to be reported to SC. Potholes have been reported. Everyone was encouraged to report potholes online.

Cllr Bellamy expressed concern that lorries are parking without lights in the laybys on the road from Junction 26 to Chelston roundabout. The cats eye between the laybys and the road are not showing which creates a danger. The road still floods during periods of heavier rainfall. The road surface is due for renewal and it is not ideal that these problems are not being dealt with.

- 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.** Cllr Silverlight and Cllr Ms Drury will arrange a date to meet to identify possible sites. The date will be shared with other councillors and they are welcome to join.
- d) Update on parishioner request for streetlights at Ham.** No update. Cllr Henley to follow up.
- e) To discuss recent fly tipping incidents.** This was covered under item 116/02/25.
- f) Any other highways matters.** No other highways matters.

121/02/25. Finance:

- a) To agree and authorise any payments.** It was resolved to make the following payments: Mrs J Larcombe - £338.44 Clerk's salary and expenses for February (Payment ref: 2425/58).
HM Revenue & Customs - £40.60 PAYE for February (Payment ref: 2425/59)
Countrywide - £135.17 grass cutting contract (Payment ref: 2425/60)
Somerset Council - £121.99 dog bin emptying (Payment ref: 2425/61)
Since the last meeting a payment a bank service charge of £6.00 was paid from the account on 31st January. A payment of £6.00 will taken on 28th February.
A payment of £267.00 has been made to the Community Heartbeat Trust (Payment ref: 2425/54); £135.17 has been paid to Countrywide for grasscutting during 2024-25 (Payment ref: 2425/58); £323.14 has been paid to Mrs J Larcombe for January and home working expenses (Payment ref: 2425/56) and £40.60 to HM Revenue & Customs for January PAYE (Payment ref: 2425/57).
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.
The current account balance is £994.00 and the Instant Access Account balance is £20,931.40.
- c) Bank reconciliations.** Noted.
- d) To agree the quote for grass cutting in the village.** It was agreed to accept the quote from Nigel Richards.
- e) To agree the quote for dog bin emptying for 2025-26.** The charge to empty the bin at Stoford Lane will be £6.50 per weekly collection. There is no other alternative so no other quotes were received. The quote was agreed.
- f) To review the Business Risk Management Document.** The document was reviewed and approved.
- g) To review the Policy Statement of Internal Control and Annual Review of Effectiveness of Internal Control 2024-25.** Reviewed and approved.

122/02/25. To agree to adopt the new NALC Model Financial Regulations personalised for West Buckland Parish Council. It was agreed to adopt the Financial Regulations.

123/02/25. To amend the Standing Orders in line with changes to the Financial Regulations. It was agreed to adopt the amended Standing Orders.

124/02/25. Playing Field:

a) Any points to note from the regular inspections. Cllr Bellamy reported that the arms on the goal posts are bent. New tie backs have been added for the goal nets.

b) To discuss quotes for play area pedestrian gate. The Clerk is waiting for additional quotes.

c) To agree playing field grass cutting for 2025-26. The Clerk is still waiting for a quote from Countrywide Grounds Maintenance. The contract will be renewed for another year if the charge doesn't increase too much.

d) Any other playing field matters. None.

125/02/25. Footpaths: any footpath matters. The footpaths are very wet at the moment. Dave Mitton, Footpath Liaison Officer, is giving up the role for personal reasons. It was felt that enough people are walking the footpaths to see any problems and report them online. A post will be put on the Facebook page to encourage them to do so. Details of how to report faults will be included

126/02/25. To agree date and format for the Annual Parish Meeting. The 2025 Annual Parish Meeting will be held at 7.00pm on 29th April and will precede the Parish Council meeting. Local groups will be asked to give an annual report.

127/02/25. Correspondence. No further correspondence.

128/02/25. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion (Not for Decisions). No urgent business.

129/02/25. To note the date of the next meeting. The next meeting will be held on 25th March 2025

Signed:
Chair

Date: