

WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 29th April 2025 at 8.10pm in the Main Hall, West Buckland Village Hall.

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

In attendance: One member of the public and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

130/04/25. To receive apologies for absence. Apologies were received from Somerset Cllr S Wakefield and R Henley. Cllr Henley had attended the Annual Parish Meeting which had been held prior to the Parish Council meeting and given a report there.

131/04/25. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda. There were no disclosures.

132/04/25. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 25/02/25 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.

133/04/25. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda (for information only). No matters arising.

134/04/25. To continue to discuss broadband issues in the parish. This has not moved any further forward. Airband is touting for business for 4G in the area. Gideon Amos MP is working on this with other MPs.

135/04/25. Democratic Period. A member of the public reported that they had tried Airband's 4G service but it had soon gone wrong. He had then experienced poor customer service from Airband.

136/04/25. Planning:

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

46/25/0011 Change of use of outbuilding into 1 No. dwelling with erection of single storey extension and erection of detached garage at Haywards Farmhouse, Haywards Road, West Buckland. Comment: No objection.

46/25/0012 Change of use of office, with storage, to holistic health, physiotherapy and wellness clinic at Unit 5 Monument View, Chelston Business Park, Wellington. Comment: No objection.

46/25/0013 Erection of temporary storage building in car parking area at Unit 5 Castle Road, Chelston Business Park, Wellington. Comment: no objection.

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

46/24/0014 Demolition of agricultural barn and erection of 1 No. dwelling (in lieu of Barn A of 46/23/0003CQ) at Catsbear Barns, Ruggin Road, West Buckland. Decision: refusal.

The reasoning of the Planning Officer was felt to be good. It was inline with the recommendations of the Parish Council.

c) Aldi public consultation. This is a public consultation and comments can be made online. It is not at the planning application stage. Councillors feel this proposed development is on the wrong side of Wellington.

d) Any other planning matters. No other planning matters.

137/04/25. Highways.

a) To discuss the proposals for the Junction 26/Chelston refurbishment and agree response from the Parish Council. This was discussed in detail at the Annual Parish Meeting. Councillors and the Clerk attended a Teams meeting organised by Somerset Council to brief them on the major refurbishment of the road from M5 J26 to the Chelston roundabout. The link road could be closed from 1st June to 26th September and this will really impact on the village.

The work is being carried out during the summer as the Highways Depot must have full access for its obligations around gritting within statutory time limits. Sawyers Hill at the roundabout will be closed totally and become their 'site depot' on 1st June. On 16th June the M5 J26 and Chelston Link Road closes totally. Traffic wishing to join or leave the M5 at this junction will have to use the signed diversions via A38 between J25 to J27.

Residents will have to come and go via the A38 junction at the World's End. There will be a drop in event 14th May at the village hall from 1530 to 1900 where all information will be available alongside a team of those involved in the project. There will be 2 other drop ins that week in Wellington- dates and venues TBA.

The 'local' diversion will be via Ford St from Gerbestone Lane. This will NOT be a signposted diversion just for those with 'local knowledge'.

b) To note any required work to be reported to SC. None.

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

d) SID update. The Police have put a SID in front of the West Buckland sign on Sawyers Hill and another in Silver Street, near the Village Hall. Due to the extra work created by the travellers illegally entering the playing field and the additional costs the Council has put its plans for installing SIDs on hold this month.

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

f) Any other highways matters. None.

138/04/25. Finance:

a) To agree and authorise any payments. It was resolved to make the following payments: Mr N Richards - £80.00 grass cutting of verges and the war memorial grass (Payment ref: 2526/01)

Countrywide - £143.77 playing field and play area grass cutting contract for 2025-2026 (Payment ref: 2526/02)

R W Gale Ltd - £2,430.00 concrete blocks to improve playing field security (Payment ref: 2526/03)

Mrs J Larcombe - £507.92 Clerk's salary, additional hours & expenses for April (Payment ref: 2526/04)

HM Revenue & Customs - £76.20 PAYE for April (Payment ref: 2526/05)

An invoice for £516.63, the Somerset Association of Local Councils annual subscription, was presented for payment. Payment was deferred to the next meeting to allow the Clerk to check the Council was not being overcharged.

Payments for March were:

Mrs J Larcombe - £354.44 Clerk's salary & expenses for March (Payment ref: 2425/62)

HM Revenue & Customs - £48.20 PAYE for March (Payment ref: 2425/63)

Somerset Council - £121.99 dog bin emptying January 2025 – March 2025
(Payment ref: 2425/64)

A bank service charge of £6.00 was taken on 28th February and 31st March and another will be taken on 30th April.

An internal transfer will be set up to leave a balance of £1,000 in the Current Account.

b) To report on expenditure incurred and decisions made due to travellers illegally using the playing field. A decision was made to hire GRC (Legal Services) Ltd to evict the travellers from the playing field. The invoice has not been received but is expected to be about £4,595.00 + VAT. Due to the need for immediate action and the specialism of the work there was no time to obtain three quotes. This company had been used successfully by Somerset Council and has its own legal department.

Once the travellers had been evicted concrete blocks were immediately placed around the inside of the fence and across the gate to prevent the travellers from re-entering. The invoice for the concrete blocks was £2,430.00. There was not time to obtain three quotes.

Before the field could be opened again it had to be cleaned, Three quotes were obtained and the cost will be £425.00 plus VAT.

The Clerk worked an additional 12 hours on top of her contracted hours and made two additional journeys to West Buckland for meetings and decision making.

This expenditure will need to be paid from the Council's general reserves.

West Buckland Village Hall Committee has agreed to give a donation of £2025.00. There have been offers of other donations and these will be followed up.

c) To discuss the quote for a new playing field gate to improve security. A much stronger gate with a lock that cannot be cut off is required. One quote has been received and two more will be obtained. Power was delegated to the Chair, Vice-chair and Clerk to decide which quote to accept.

d) To note any receipts since the last meeting and the bank accounts balances. Bank interest of £129.51 was received on 31st March 2025.

Since the last meeting two payments have been received from Somerset Council, a CIL payment of £1,947.81 and the precept, £13,324.00. A VAT payment of £426.26 has been received.

The current account balance is £14,750.26 and the Instant Access Account balance is £19248.00

e) Bank reconciliations. Noted.

139/04/25. Playing Field:

a) Any points to note from the regular inspections. No damage was caused to the play equipment while the travellers were illegally camped on the field. The apple trees were not damaged. Inspections were halted while the field was closed but have now restarted. The arms on the goal posts are bent. Branches from the trees on the playing field hedge on the boundary at the end of Dyers Close are falling onto parked cars during stormy weather. Quotes will be obtained for work to the trees.

b) Update on playing field grass cutting for 2025-26. The contract with Countrywide Grounds Maintenance (SW) Ltd has been extended for a further year. There was a small increase to the charge.

c) Any other playing field matters. None.

140/04/25. Footpaths: any footpath matters. Covered at the Annual Parish Meeting held before the Parish Council meeting. Mr Mitton is retiring as Public Paths Liaison Officer and a new PPLO is needed.

141/04/25. Correspondence. There was no further correspondence.
The Clerk was asked to put together a short bullet point guide on the actions that had been taken to deal with the travellers. This could be shared with LCN members.

142/04/25. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion (Not for Decisions). No urgent business.

143/04/25. To note the date of the next meeting. The next meeting will be held on 27th May 2025. It will be the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

The meeting closed at 9pm.

Signed:
Chair

Date.