

## WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

### **The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 27th May 2025 at 7.30pm in the Main Hall, at West Buckland Village Hall.**

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

**In attendance:** Somerset Council Cllr S Wakefield, Syed Shah, Public Liaison Office J26/Chelston Scheme, 5 members of the public and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

#### **01/05/25. Election of Officers:**

**a) Chair.** Cllr C Silverlight was proposed by Cllr Ms Drury and seconded by Cllr Bellamy. There were no other nominations and Cllr Silverlight was unanimously elected as Chair. Cllr Silverlight signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office Form

**b) Vice chair.** Cllr Ms Drury was proposed by Cllr Paul and seconded by Cllr Bellamy. There were no other nominations. Cllr Ms Drury was unanimously elected as Vice-chair.

**02/05/25. To receive apologies for absence.** Apologies were accepted from Cllr Mrs Moore. Apologies were received from SC Cllr R Henley.

**03/05/25. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda.** No disclosures.

**04/03/25. J26 to Chelston road project – update from Syed Shah, Somerset Council Public Liaison Officer.** Mr Shah introduced himself and explained his background and experience working across the country on numerous road schemes. As Public Liaison Officer for the scheme he is working with Somerset Council to make things go as smoothly as possible. It was difficult to get permission from his employers to release him from his current scheme and an impact assessment was needed. He intends to respond to emails within 24 hours compared with Somerset Council who normally aim to reply within 10 working days. However, in his experience Somerset Council is a better authority than some. Mr Shah is encouraging people to have conversations with him rather than corresponding by email. He explained the challenges of this major scheme. The road does need to be replaced and when funding does become available SC jumps on it as who knows what the priorities will be in 12 months' time. This project is classed as a refurbishment which means they cannot change anything. There is no opportunity for it to be made into a dual carriageway. There has to be a full closure because due to the height of the motorway above the J26 roundabout, this section will involve removing the existing concrete carriageway and sub-base to a depth of around one metre deep, and full-depth reconstruction. There is clay underneath the 20mm layer of concrete and this will be replaced by rubble. Putting traffic lights so close to the motorway isn't usually done. The project is time sensitive and needs to be finished by the end of September to allow the gritting lorries access to the network October onwards. According to Somerset Council's data there are fewer daily journeys in peak congestion times in the summer holidays when schools are closed. Mr Shah has only met the construction bosses briefly and the first project meeting is tomorrow, 28<sup>th</sup> May. The barrier to access the Taunton Deane Motorway Services and the M5 can only

be used by the Emergency Services.

Mr Shah has drafted his first newsletter for residents and hopes to have produced a second by the start of the road closures. The Parish Council will share the newsletters on Facebook as Mr Shah does not use this.

In response to questions the following points were made:

- A decision is due to be made tomorrow, 28<sup>th</sup> May, whether the compound will be sited on Foxmoor Business Park rather than Sawyers Hill. There will be a cost involved if it is sited at Foxmoor Business Park and legal documents will need to be signed.
- The closure of the roundabout at Junction 26 will be no earlier than 9pm on 15<sup>th</sup> June.
- A claim that the money had been available for 4 years was queried. £5.8million plus £500,000 carbon reduction funding is available now and covers the contractor's tender so has to be used now. If the plug was pulled it wouldn't benefit anyone.
- Falcon/Megabus is a private service and they pulled tickets as soon as they were made aware of the road closures.
- If arrangements for the emergency services were not acceptable to them the project would not be going ahead. There will be ways for them to get onto the M5 if they need to because of the 24 hour traffic management on site. Police in lower ranks cannot make recommendations. Noted that it would be useful if the public were aware there are arrangements in place as there is concern from the public that response times will be longer. Mr Shah will see if there is information available that can be shared. Cllr Silverlight asked for concrete assurances.
- Heidelberg Materials is the contractor for this scheme.
- Along the link-road the contractor will be rubblizing the existing concrete carriageway, which will form the subbase for the new road surface.
- Councillors felt the public relations for the project was terrible and the short notice of the project was appalling. It has been on the table for four to five years with several false starts. The amount of consultation was abysmal; it was presented as a done deal. Cllr Drury and Cllr Paul stayed at the drop-in session at West Buckland Village Hall for its entirety and felt the responses to queries was patronising.
- A security person was present at the drop-ins because Somerset Council was not sure what the mood of the audience would be. The top people at Somerset Council were at the drop-ins which was unusual in Mr Shah's experience. Passions were still running high. They haven't said they won't do things, they will see how it works.
- The Worlds End junction is recognised by Somerset Council as a notorious junction and will be monitored from day one. Traffic lights are not planned because of concerns about congestion on the A38. Mr Shah will monitor the junction by driving it and will also park close to it to monitor it. He will feed back to his bosses as soon as the scheme starts. As a former Police Traffic Officer he will be looking at it with a slightly different eye than the Highways Inspectors. Details of how it will be monitored by Somerset Council will be on the scheme's dedicated webpage; <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/major-refurbishment-of-junction-26-and-chelston-link-road/> Cllr Wakefield felt people would adapt if they have to wait a long time at the junction.
- It is key that the project finishes on time.

- No statistics are available about the number of people coming off at Junction 26.
- The lane between Hockholler and Willowbrook and Gerbestone Lane have pinch points and are likely to get gridlocked. Circulatory routes have been suggested but Somerset Council feel residents wouldn't like this.
- There is concern about farm machinery, particularly combines, using the local lanes while there is an increase in traffic. Planning is taking place behind the scenes.
- Explaining that years ago the roundabout and slip road bank were planted by residents. as a nature reserve gave Mr Shah context and he will feed back and see what can be done to protect.

Mr Shah was thanked for attending and he agreed to attend the next meeting to give an update. The Clerk will invite him. He can be contacted by phoning 07717 844 042 or emailing [syed.shah@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:syed.shah@somerset.gov.uk)

The members of the public left the meeting.

**05/05/25. Democratic Period.** No questions.

**06/05/25. Report from Somerset Councillors.** The Somerset Councillors report for April/May was circulated by email. Cllr Wakefield will be sending another report soon. She emphasised the need for more foster carers; there are still too many children in care. The support and training available were outlined. The Parish Council will promote the recruitment of more foster carers on its Facebook page. Cllr Wakefield will provide information for this.

As the Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Housing Cllr Wakefield gave a report to Somerset Council's Annual Meeting. 6,000 people are supported by micro providers. 5,381 Care Act Assessments have been completed. The backlog has been reduced to an average of 420 applications per month. There are more delays in South Somerset because of a shortage of social workers. Cllr Wakefield is worried about requests going up. People in care homes are running out of money and are having to be supported.

The two social housing properties in West Buckland are likely to be done up rather than being sold. Cllr Wakefield is trying to get social housing nearer the top in terms of priorities.

Cllr Wakefield left the meeting.

**07/05/25. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 29/04/25 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.

**08/05/25. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda (for information only).** No matters arising.

**09/05/25. To continue to discuss broadband issues in the parish.** No update.

**10/05/25. Planning:**

**a) To consider any planning applications received by the Parish Council prior to the meeting.** The following application was received a few hours before the meeting: 43/25/0012/VSC. Variation to Section 106 agreement on application

48/16/0033 for the modification of planning obligations to amend Schedule 3 (access for Network Rail), Schedule 5 (Highway Works) and Schedule 6 (The Square) on land north of Taunton Road, Longforth Farm, Wellington. It was agreed to leave it to Wellington Town Council to make a comment.

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

**46/25/0008/CQ** Application for Prior Approval for proposed change of use from agricultural building to 1 No. dwelling house (Class C3) and associated building operations at Buckland House, Hockholler Road, West Buckland. Decision: Prior approval refusal. It was noted that the application was refused because it didn't meet the criteria.

**46/25/0013** Erection of temporary storage building in car parking area at Unit 5 Castle Road, Chelston Business Park, Wellington. Decision: conditional approval granted

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

**11/05/25. Highways.**

**a) To note any required work to be reported to SC.** There has been a temporary closure of Gerbestone Lane to allow for potholes to be filled ahead of the J26 and Chelston Link Road closure.

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

**c) SID update.** The SIDs put into position by the Police are only there on a temporary basis. The Clerk will follow up on the approval needed for the sites put forward by the Parish Council.

**d) Update on parishioner request for streetlights at Ham.** No update. This will be moved to the Somerset Councillor Report for the next meeting.

**e) Any other highways matters.** No other highways matters.

**12/05/25. Finance:**

**a) To agree and authorise any payments.** It was resolved to make the following payments: Mr N Richards - £60.00 grass cutting in the village (Payment ref: 2526/10)

Countrywide - £143.77 grass cutting contract for playing field (Payment ref: 2526/11)

Cllr C Silverlight - £21.99 expenses claim for a new padlock (Payment ref: 2526/12)

Mrs J Larcombe - £324.24 Clerk's salary and expenses for May (Payment ref: 2526/14)

HM Revenue & Customs - £55.60 PAYE for May (Payment ref: 2526/15)

Zurich - £599.00 insurance renewal (Payment ref: 2526/16)

Councillors considered the invoice for £516.63 for renewal of the membership for Somerset Association of Local Councils and agreed that in light of the additional expenses incurred by the travellers illegal occupation of the playing field they would not renew membership for 2025-26.

Since the last meeting bank service charges of £6.00 were paid from the account on 30<sup>th</sup> April. Another payment of £6.00 will be taken on 30<sup>th</sup> May.

£510.00 has been paid to The Sleek Easy Clean for cleaning of the playing field after the eviction (Payment ref: 2526/07); £5,514.00 has been paid to GRC (Legal Services) Limited for the eviction of unauthorised occupiers of land (Payment ref:

2526/08) and a Direct Debit of £47.00 has been made to the ICO for the annual data protection fee (Payment ref: 2526/09),  
Transfers were made from the Current Account to the Instant Access account to bring the balance back to £1,000.00.

It was agreed to accept the bespoke quote from Western Fabrications Ltd for a security gate for the playing field.

**b) To note any receipts since the last meeting and the bank accounts balances.** Since the last meeting £73.47 has been received from Nexus, income from the EV Charging Point. £2,025.00 has been received from the West Buckland Village Hall Trust towards building up the Council's reserves again. A donation of £500 has been received from Blackdown Agility.

The current account balance is £3,551.47 and the Instant Access Account balance is £25,678.18.

**c) Bank reconciliation 30.04.25.** To be checked following the meeting.

**d) AGAR update.** To be presented at the June meeting.

**13/05/25. Playing Field:**

**a) Any points to note from the regular inspections.** Nothing to report. Cllr Bellamy had added the concrete blocks to the inspection checklist.

**b) Any other playing field matters.** Councillors agreed to a request for the playing field to be used for a rally dog show on 13th & 14th September. Permission was given for Cotford Sunday league to use the playing field on a Friday evening for training.

**14/05/25. Footpaths: any footpath matters.** No footpath matters.

**15/05/25. Correspondence.** The following correspondence was noted:

Blackdown Hills Parish Network – invitation to 2025 AGM on Thursday 3rd July, Yarcombe Village Hall at 7pm. Cllr Silverlight will see if he is able to attend closer to the date.

Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN Notes.

**16/05/25. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion (Not for Decisions).** No urgent business.

**17/05/25. To note the date of the next meeting.** As apologies had been received for 24<sup>th</sup> June there is a risk the meeting will not be quorate. Date to be reviewed.

Signed:  
Chair

Date: