

WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 27th January 2026 at 7.30pm, in the Committee Room, West Buckland Village Hall.

Present: Cllr's C Silverlight (Chair), S Bellamy, Mrs N Francis-Bellamy and Mrs B Moore.

In attendance: Somerset Councillor S Wakefield, two members of the Ham Stream Maintenance Group and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

145/01/26. To receive apologies for absence. Apologies were accepted from Cllr Paul and Cllr Ms Drury. Cllr Ms Drury observed the meeting virtually.

146/01/26. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda. No disclosures.

147/01/26. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 06/01/26 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.

148/01/26. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda (for information only). None.

149/01/26. Report from Somerset Councillors. A written report from Cllr Wakefield was circulated by email earlier in the month. She noted the information on the finance settlement from the government in December. The final position will be known in February when the Council has to set its budget for 2026-27.

Somerset Council are circulating advise about flooding to City, Town and Parish Councils.

Making pothole repairs permanent is proving to be difficult in the very wet weather. The Environment Agency has also circulated advise.

The slinky bus service can be ordered in advance by phone or email. Cllr Mrs Moore explained she had tried but hadn't been able to book.

A three year adult strategy review is being carried out with people who have lived experience.

West Hatch residents had to make a huge complaint when flooding was caused by a trench not being filled in properly after fibre cable was installed. Somerset Council didn't have an area officer at that time and it was really complicated to put right.

A warm homes scheme is about to be launched. One approved contractor will be used.

Cllr Wakefield was very supportive of the Talking Café and recognised that it was really important for those that are isolated. She would have tried to attend if she didn't already have another commitment.

150/01/26. To continue to discuss broadband issues in the parish. Cllr Ms Drury has received a response to an email she sent to Gideon Amos MP. His caseworker assured her that Mr Amos has continued to press Ministers and other key stakeholders, including Building Digital UK, Connecting Devon and Somerset, the Internet Service Providers' Association and Airband, to address the ongoing delays in full fibre rollout, particularly in rural communities like West Buckland, abandoned by Airband in October 2024 and left with no clear remedy. Earlier in January 2026, he met with the Minister for Telecoms to escalate his concerns and secure a commitment to the publishing of a definitive, address level timetable for Fibre To The Premises (FTTP) connections in this part of Somerset. He has

yet to receive a formal written response.

The government has made a mess of plans to roll out FTTP across the country and unless it subsidises the work heavily it will not get done because it is not cost effective. For some companies the hoops Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) expected them to jump through made it too difficult to get involved. Cllr Ms Drury does understand the trials and tribulations as she is looking at losing her copper wire connection, there is no plan for her to get FTTP and her mobile signal is poor. Some TV services are now being delivered by cable rather than satellite. Recently the access to her home was washed away by heavy rain. If her copper wire connection had ended, she would have been unable to communicate. It is planned to retire analogue phones by 31st January 2027 and thousands of rural residents will be disconnected from communication. Cllr Wakefield said she would go back to CDS. This is very real and it is ridiculous that while other places are going forward and improving services it is going backwards here. Starlink will be the only option and there is a real risk with that. She will also go back to the MP as he is doing a good job. Unfortunately, it is in the control of central government.

151/01/26. Democratic period. The members of the Ham Stream Maintenance Group updated the Parish Council on preparations for submitting a second bid to the Somerset Rivers Authority for funding for the next phases of the flood relief scheme at Ham. The lane flooded again last night but not as bad as it did previously. Another full application has to be made and the deadline for applications is 24th February, the date of the next Parish Council meeting. A good business case will need to be made and the signing off of this was delegated to Cllr Silverlight, Cllr Ms Drury and the Clerk. The tenant of the land has agreed to do the long term maintenance. Two more quotes have been received but they are more expensive. SRA do like to see a financial contribution towards the work. (This was decided later in the meeting when the budget for 2025-26 was agreed). The planned work includes the clearing of a culvert which Somerset Council had agreed to clear last year but later said they were unable to do as they did not have the equipment, which is worrying.

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

152/01/26. Confirmation of arrangements for the first monthly Talking Cafe on 28th January and adoption of a Safeguarding Policy. Arrangements are in place for the first Talking Café tomorrow. Cllr Mrs Moore has written a risk assessment. It has been publicised on Facebook and more publicity will be added. The Parish Council will cover the refreshment costs but there is a possibility of applying for funding from Somerset Association of Local Councils Community Health and Wellbeing schemes. A draft Safeguarding Policy has been produced. Approval was deferred to the next meeting to allow time for councillors to review it. The Clerk has up to date Safeguarding Training and it was agreed that she would be the Council's Safeguarding Officer.

Cllr Wakefield left the meeting.

153/01/26. Planning:

a) To consider any planning applications received by the Parish Council prior to the meeting. No applications received.

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

c) **Any other planning matters.** A report of a mobile home being sited allegedly without permission will be looked into further.

154/01/26. Highways.

a) **To note any required work to be reported to SC.** While there are plans to improve the junction on the A38 at the Worlds End it is thought to be unlikely that traffic lights will be installed, as is being rumoured.

b) **Dates for meeting with Highways Officer re outstanding highways work (Kerb at Dyers Close and drainage in Silver Street.** The Council are still waiting for dates from Gwyn Hughes, Somerset Council Assistant Highway Service Manager.

c) **Update on plans for SIDs.** A budget that includes the purchase of two Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) is one of the options for 2026-27 to be discussed under item 155/01/26. Although another Local Community Network (LCN) has received different advice, Kate Brown, Highways Officer, has advised the Clerk that the Memorandum of Understanding and SID guidelines were created to ensure compliance and ultimately ensure the safety of the individuals managing the programme in a consistent way across the County. As it stands, Chapter 8 training is required to carry out any activities relating to SID installations/removals. There is currently no dispensation to this though during future reviews and the evolution of the Volunteer programme this may change. She acknowledged that it is often challenging to find someone who is either already Chapter 8 trained, or happy to do the course, but suggested this is where the LCN can benefit as in other areas, parishes do work collaboratively and have a pool of Chapter 8 trained personnel that volunteer on a periodic basis which can make this a more cost effective and efficient way of operating. As no one has current Chapter 8 training it was agreed to delay the introduction of the Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) and discuss again in six months' time. During this time arrangements can be made for Cllr Paul to undertake Chapter 8 training.

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

155/01/26. Finance:

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

Countrywide	£143.77	Grass cutting contract for playing field	2526/61
Jill Larcombe	£345.29	Clerk's salary & expenses for January	2526/62
HM Revenue & Customs	£58.00	PAYE for January	2526/63
West Buckland Village Hall Trust	£14.00	Hall hire 6 th January	2526/64

Since the last meeting a bank service charge of £6.00 was paid from the account on 31th December and another one will be taken on 31st January.

A transfer was made from the Current Account to the Instant Access Account. An internal transfer will be made to bring the Current Account balance to £1,000.

b) **To note any receipts since the last meeting and the bank accounts balances.** Since the last meeting there have been no receipts.

The current account balance is £862.23 and the Instant Access Account balance is £17,536.51.

c) **To agree the budget for 2026-27.** The Clerk presented two budget options and an accompanying written report. Both budgets required raising the precept to cover increased costs. One option included the purchase of SIDs, partially through the use of earmarked CIL funds. It was resolved to approve the option

without the purchase of SIDs with an addition of £500 to payments to give a grant of £500 towards the flood prevention project at Ham and in receipts an addition of £500 to the precept.

All grants will be subject to a documented request to the Parish Council. This includes the Churchyard Grant. A form will be sent to the PCC Treasurer so that an application can be made.

d) To agree the precept for 2026-27. It was agreed to request a precept of £15,285.

156/01/26. Playing Field:

a) Any points to note from the regular inspection. No points to note

b) To consider a request from the Chair of the Village Hall Committee for permission to use the playing field on 20 June 2026 for a summer evening event with a band, bar and food. The request was agreed.

c) Any other playing field matters. It was suggested that there needs to be a path with a hard service between the car park and play area. Costings will need to be obtained.

157/01/26. Footpaths: to note any footpath matters. The issue with the dangerous stile remains. The number of outstanding faults on the interactive Bridleway and Footpath map on the Somerset Council website indicates the Public Rights of Way Team are not coping. Volunteers cannot do everything.

158/01/26. Update on reconnection of EV Charging Point to wi-fi. A sim card has been ordered and is being sent to the Clerk. An invoice will be sent to the Village Hall Committee if there is any cost involved.

159/01/26. Correspondence. There was no further correspondence.

160/01/26. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion (Not for Decisions).
No urgent business.

161/01/26. To note the date of the next meeting. 24th February 2026.

Signed:
Chair

Date: