

WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 24th February 2026 at 7.30pm, in the Committee Room, West Buckland Village Hall.

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

In attendance: Somerset Councillor S Wakefield and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

162/02/26. To receive apologies for absence. Apologies were accepted from Cllr's S Bellamy and Mrs N Francis-Bellamy.

163/02/26. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda. No disclosures.

164/02/26. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 27/01/26 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.

165/02/26. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda (for information only). None.

166/02/26. Report from Somerset Councillors. Cllr Wakefield explained that Cllr Henley is unwell. He will try to attend parish council meetings when she is away for three weeks next month.

Flooding in the county has taken up a lot of staff time. Water is now gradually going away. The Somerset Rivers Authority are there but the amount of funding they receive each year has remained static.

The 2026-27 budget will be presented to the Executive tomorrow and Council next week. The Council will be able to set a balanced budget because of a one-year fix but it will be harder next year. There is a £25million gap and the overspend will need to be stopped. The Government has agreed to cover 90% of the SEND deficit at the end of March but it will increase again next year. The Council is trying to keep as many children in mainstream school as possible. The opposition has no alternative budget so the proposed budget should go through. Cllr Wakefield reported that she has written to Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) about broadband issues and the risk of loss of communication in the area. Gideon Amos MP is doing his best to get answers from Government. The big companies that are involved in delivering Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) superfast broadband are only thinking about making a profit and all the hoops that have to be gone through is making it too difficult for small companies to get involved. Delivering FTTP costs a lot more in rural areas and it should be possible for the cable for fibre to be attached to telegraph poles rather than being laid underground. No one seems to have overall control. In 2029 Sky and Freesat will turn off satellite and their services will only be delivered by cable. Cllr Paul said there is a rumour that fibre is being installed as far as Budgetts Cross.

Cllr Ms Drury mentioned the issue of dishes on a mobile phone mast being turned to improve mobile signal to people who already have good communication while making it worse for areas such as Ruggin where people are at risk of losing communication.

Since the last meeting Gideon Amos MP has emailed a number of parish clerks across the Wellington and Taunton area to give them an update on what he has done over the past six months to expedite full fibre connections in our rural communities. This includes a meeting with the Minister for Telecoms in January

2026 at which he raised constituents' concerns, in particular those still dependent on ageing copper lines for internet access.

Cllr Wakefield left the meeting.

167/02/26. Democratic Period. No members of the public present.

169/02/26. Planning:

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

46/26/0001 Change of use of car park into a self storage container yard (including garage building) on former car park of Blackbird Inn, Wellington Road, West Buckland (retention of part works already undertaken). Comment: recommend refusal. The development is contrary to CP 8 ENVIRONMENT of the Taunton Deane Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy 2011-2028. It is in an area defined as a countryside location. The development is out of character with the existing rural landscape, housing and infrastructure along the A38 and will be detrimental to the visual amenity and the overall quality of the natural environment of the area. It is in-appropriate in terms siting and design. It is a development that would be much better suited to an a site such as the Foxmoor Business Park.

43/25/0088 Application for Approval of Reserved Matters following Outline Application 43/23/0056 for the layout, landscaping, scale and appearance of the erection of 178 No. dwellings and associated infrastructure on land north of Taunton Road, Longforth Park, Wellington. No comment.

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

c) Any other planning matters. Further details were given about the allegation of a planning breach mentioned at the last meeting.

170/02/26. Highways.

a) To note any required work to be reported to SC. There are a number of potholes in the parish and these are being reported.

b) Dates for meeting with Highways Officer re outstanding highways work (Kerb at Dyers Close and drainage in Silver Street. No dates received. Officers have been busy due to the flooding issues.

c) Any other highways matters. None.

171/02/26. To report on fly tipping on Buckland Hill. Cllr Silverlight received a report from a parishioner that tyres are being dumped on the verge of Buckland Hill as well as along the top, something that has been happening for ages. Cllr Silverlight emailed Chris Goode, Community Ranger East Devon and Blackdown Hills Forestry England, to inform him and he replied to say that their local team had recently visited the site and removed all the tyres. He replied to say he was aware that fly tipping in this area has been an ongoing issue, and he will continue to monitor the site during his routine inspections. If any useful information comes to light that could assist enforcement - such as identifying patterns or potential witnesses it will be shared with the police and Somerset Council. He is planning to install a wildlife camera there to hopefully catch any fly tippers and will add some CCTV signs and other warning signs too. He asked Cllr Silverlight to get as

many people as possible to report the incident to 101 online. This has been reported to PCSO Bramley who has supplied a log number.

172/02/26. To receive a report on the first monthly Talking Cafe on 28th January and plans for the second on 25th February. Only one member of the public attended on the 28th January and it is hoped attendance will improve as more people become aware of the Talking Café sessions. It was questioned whether the time at which the sessions were being held were a problem but that is the only regular availability of the Village Hall. A representative from the Village Agent attended to give support options for anyone looking for advice and a volunteer from SPARK attended to provide digital support. The next session is tomorrow (25th February) and it is hoped that more people will attend.

173/02/26. Finance:

a) To agree and authorise any payments including a payment to BHPN.

It was resolved to make the following payments:

Countrywide	£143.77	Grass cutting contract for playing field	2526/67
Jill Larcombe	£304.79	Clerk's salary & expenses for February	2526/68
HM Revenue & Customs	£58.00	PAYE for February	2526/69
West Buckland Village Hall Trust	£14.00	Hall hire 27 th January	2526/70
Blackdown Hills Parish Network	£50.00	Contribution	2526/71
Cllr Mrs Moore	£22.88	Expenses for Talking Cafe	2526/72

Since the last meeting the following payments have been made: Somerset Council - £101.40 dog bin emptying Qtr 2 (Payment ref: 2526/65) and Somerset Council £101.40 dog bin emptying Qtr 3 (payment ref: 2526/66).

Since the last meeting a bank service charge of £6.00 was paid from the account on 31th January and a payment of £7.00 will be taken on 28th February.

Transfers were 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.

As the next meeting is on the last day of the 2026-27 financial year it was agreed that regular monthly payments to the Clerk, HMRC, Countrywide and West Buckland Village Hall Trust could be set up and approved in time to be cleared payments by the end of banking on 31st March.

The Clerk will arrange to purchase the domain name westbucklandpcsomerset.org.uk

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 £1,006.00 and the Instant Access Account balance is £16,549.88.

c) Bank reconciliation 31.01.26. The bank reconciliation was checked and signed by Cllr Paul.

d) To review the Business Risk Assessment. The Business Risk Assessment was reviewed and agreed.

e) Review of Financial Regulations. The Financial Regulations had been updated in line with NALC recommendations. It was agreed to adopt the updated

Financial Regulations.

f) Review of Internal Controls and Internal Audit. The document was reviewed and agreed.

174/02/26. Playing Field:

a) Any points to note from the regular inspection. Cllr Mrs Moore is checking the play area and field while Cllr Bellamy is on holiday. No points to note.

b) To consider a request for permission to park some cars on the playing field on 16 May from 7am to 1pm during a fund-raising cycle jumble sale in the Village Hall. Permission was granted subject to agreement being given that the gate will be manned at all times and that the field is dry enough to park cars on in the area shown in the Playing Field Policy. The code for the keysafe will be given to the Chair of the Village Hall Committee but this is not for wider transmission. A member of the committee will need to open the keysafe.

c) Any other playing field matters. There are lots of dead Elm trees in the hedge around the playing field. One tree surgeon has looked at the work involved and will provide a quote. Two further quotes will be obtained.

175/02/26. Footpaths: to note any footpath matters. No footpath matters.

176/02/26. To discuss how to proceed on the reconnection of EV Charging Point to wi-fi. Hydra EVC Ltd provided a sim card but even when an antenna was added there wasn't a good enough signal. The only solution appears to be to connect it to the internet again by paying for a new ethernet cable to be fitted to connect the EV charging point to the new router in the Village Hall. The Chair of the Village Hall Committee will be contacted to make arrangements for this work to be carried out when the hall is not being used.

177/02/26. To review/adopt the following policies etc

a) Standing Orders. Carried forward to the next meeting.

b) Safeguarding Policy. Carried forward to the next meeting.

c) IT Policy. Carried forward to the next meeting.

d) Data Protection Policy. Carried forward to the next meeting.

e) Model Publication Scheme. Carried forward to the next meeting.

178/02/26. Correspondence. There was no further correspondence.

179/02/26. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion (Not for Decisions). No urgent business.

180/02/26. To note the date of the next meeting. 31st March 2026.

Signed:
Chair

Date: