

# WEST BUCKLAND ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

## DRAFT MINUTES

**The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024 in the Committee Room,  
West Buckland Village Hall at 7.00pm**

**Present:** Cllr's C Silverlight (Chair), Ms S Drury, S Bellamy, Mrs B Moore and A Paul;  
Somerset Cllr R Henley and 12 members of the public.

**In attendance:** Mrs J Larcombe, Parish Council Clerk.

- 1. Welcome from the Chairman.** Cllr Silverlight welcomed everyone to the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting.
- 2. Apologies.** Apologies were received from Somerset Cllr S Wakefield.
- 3. To agree the minutes of the APM held on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024.** The minutes were agreed.
- 4. Matters arising from the previous minutes.** No matters arising.
- 5. Chairman's Report for 2024/25.** The Parish Council has continued to maintain all of its activities despite a reduced compliment of Councillors (five instead of seven).

The Ham Stream Maintenance Group (HSMG), a group of residents, supported by Councillors (who attended site visits and meetings with organisations concerned, suggesting contractors, and by the WBPC Clerk who managed the bid on their behalf) were seeking funding to relieve flooding. The HSMG was successful in its bid to the Somerset Rivers Authority's Community Flood Action Fund for the Asham Lane Flood Relief Scheme.

Also in Ham, a resident has requested additional street lights and Cllr Henley of Somerset Council has been pursuing this.

The challenges for older residents of West Buckland who have had to stop driving was raised. To help alleviate this Cllr Bellamy will act as a link with the Village Agent and Cllr Mrs Moore is looking at how the Parish Council can offer support.

The Avon & Somerset Police's Rural Crime Team was temporarily redeployed in Aug 2024, no notification of their reinstatement has been received.

**Broadband** continues to be an issue. Airband, contracted by Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS), were unable to deliver promised connections, CDS were unable to deliver anything and our (then) MP, Rebecca Pow failed to respond to concerns raised. Our new MP, Gideon Amos is actively pursuing the matter at Government level. I could go on, but...

**Planning.** The Parish Council continues to comment and make recommendations on local planning applications with the aim of maintaining the environment and amenities whilst encouraging suitable and beneficial development in West Buckland.

Road improvements at the Blackdown Garden Centre were finally implemented.

### **Highways.**

**Road Markings.** The PC identified where they needed refreshing which were completed by SC Highways.

**Speed Indicator Devices.** The PC has recommended sites to SC Highways. Meanwhile, the Police have installed SIDS at two locations, though these are temporary.

The Silver Street World's End junction. SC Cllrs 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.

**Local Community Network meetings** Councillor Bellamy has attended several LCN meetings. He will be making a separate report.

**Bus Service.** West Buckland now has a bus service. Bus route 27 in runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

**Village Hall.** Electric Vehicle charging point. The PC reached an agreement with the VH and lowered the rate to attract more users.

**Reports.** The Parish Council continues to be supported with reports from the Police and we are most grateful for the continuing support and reports from Somerset Councillors Sarah Wakefield and Ross Henley, and support from Gideon Amos, our new MP (July 2024)

**Playing Field.** Managed by WBPC, it continues to be a much appreciated local amenity and is regularly inspected by Councillor Bellamy. There was a recent incursion by travellers which will be reported under a separate item.

**Housing Needs Survey.** The Survey which identified the housing needs in WB was completed.

On that theme, Somerset Council want to sell three empty council houses. This is being looked into by our SC Councillors. One of the three properties identified is in WB village. The PC are keen for SC to refurbish the property and for it to remain within the housing portfolio as we have identified a housing need.

**Fingerposts.** The FP in the middle of the village was repainted, as were the railings of the War Memorial.

**Footpaths.** Dave Mitton, our Footpath Liaison Officer, is giving up the role and is looking for a replacement. Our thanks go to Dave for his sterling work to keep our footpaths open and well managed.

**Finances** remained stable but our reserves have been severely impacted by the cost of removing the travellers from the playing field.

- 6. To report on the traveller 'invasion' of the playing field, costs incurred and plans to improve playing field security.** Cllr Silverlight thanked everyone for their role in dealing with the situation. Special thanks were given to Dave Lacey for collecting the concrete

blocks and moving them into place as soon as the travellers had moved off the field. Also the West Buckland Village Hall Committee who agreed to pay for the concrete blocks which will remain in place to protect the field from invasion through the fencing. Although they are unsightly, they are better than traveller caravans and litter. GRC, the company that moved the travellers off the field, reported the travellers were shocked to be moved off the field so quickly. They were expecting to stay until after Easter. GRC warned that now the travellers have found the field they are likely to return. The Parish council were thanked for getting the travellers off the field in good time.

**7. Report from Somerset Councillors.** Cllr Henley said he was pleased to help the Parish Council with the removal of the travellers. He received a phone call at 9pm on the night they moved onto the playing field. The Parish Council moved quickly. Because of Somerset Council's Duty of Care it takes them longer to move travellers on. The risk of return needs to be taken seriously. The travellers immediately moved back towards Taunton. They usually use the Park & Ride car parks but are moving to other places. There have been three incursions in Taunton.

There are plans to widen the road by the Worlds End in the autumn using S106 funding from the Orchard Grove housing development.

Cllr Henley said he felt very strongly about Somerset Council keeping the empty council house in Frog Lane. The Housing Needs Survey shows the need for affordable housing. There are three families who would like affordable housing in the parish.

The new no 27 bus service started last Tuesday and had its first passenger from West Buckland. This service will run on Tuesdays and Thursdays and people need to use it or they risk losing it. Cllr Henley is planning to do a letter drop and it needs to be publicised on social media. This is a real opportunity and something he has been pushing for. If it is well used the service could be extended to three days per week.

He told the meeting he passionately believed the resurfacing of the road between Junction 26 and Chelston roundabout needs to be done even though there have been lots of questions. He has met Cllr Richard Wilkins, Somerset Council Lead Member for Highways and will be meeting Gideon Amos MP on Thursday to visit the businesses in Foxmoor Business Park. This section of road is more than sixty years old and government funding is now available to resurface it. There is an area where water ponds on the road near Foxmoor Business Park when heading towards Wellington. The entire section of road will be ripped up and resurfaced. There will be a public consultation event in West Buckland village hall on 14<sup>th</sup> May, between 4pm and 7pm, and two events in Wellington as well. West Buckland residents will be affected the most and he hopes Wellington residents will go to the Wellington events as they have different issues. #He opened up the floor and the following points were made:

- The busiest point in the motorway season has been chosen to do the work. There is less congestion in the school holidays.
- It is difficult to use the Worlds End junction on the A38 and it was suggested that traffic control is needed to let West Buckland and Bradford-on-Tone residents out. Cllr Henley will take this up.
- Will it still be three lanes? Yes, like for like. It will be slightly raised.
- Will the road last better than other local roads which are getting potholes.
- Will emergency services be able to get through? This is a very serious point.
- Can we be assured that workers will be working all the time. They will not be working twenty four hour days but the duration of the work has been cut back from six months to three months.
- The 14<sup>th</sup> May is less than five weeks before the work starts and there can only be minor changes.

- The catchment of Junction 26 is quite large and everyone will need to go through Taunton. Person couldn't see why there couldn't be north or south access on the roundabout.
  - Cllr Ms Drury agreed the work needs doing but listening to a Microsoft Teams presentation for councillors had rung alarm bells. The work is being done in the summer so as not to affect the Highways Depot gritting lorries. If the roundabout is being done in two halves and they can do it for them, why can't they do it for us?
  - Real reservations that the local diversions of Gerbestone Lane to Ford Street and Hockholler Lane to Willowbrook will not work.
  - Cllr Silverlight felt highways should consider a one way scheme for local diversions.
  - Junction 25 was kept open when it was being enlarged. Lots of people won't use the Worlds End junction.
  - A number of people access the M5 from the Taunton Deane Service Station on the M5 and this was raised in the Teams presentation. Highways were quite adamant that this single lane road leading to the service station would be closed. It is a private road owned by the service station providers.
- Cllr Henley urged everyone to come along to the event on 14<sup>th</sup> May.

Cllr Henley left the meeting.

- 8. Clerk/RFO report on the 2024/25 Parish Council accounts.** The cost of removing the travellers and cleaning up the playing field after their removal has reduced the Council's reserves and has affected plans to purchase more play equipment in the future. There have been some offers of donations. A breakdown of the 2024-25 accounts is shown as Appendix A.
- 9. Report on the Wellington & Wiveliscombe Local Community Network (LCN) from Cllr S Bellamy.** Cllr Bellamy explained the LCN's are where parishes come together as a network. They were formed a couple of years ago after Somerset became a unitary authority. They meet four times a year with subgroups such as h highways meeting more regularly. He gave a report on the LCN meetings held during the last 12 months. There is much more discussed at these meetings, but Cllr Bellamy just captured those of relevance to West Buckland.
- 24.04.25 at Nynehead Memorial Hall: 9 Guest Speakers - Jacqui Young and Gemma Beale (Village Agents), Rosie Walker (Woodlands Trust), Ian Loudon (Welly 2 Wivey Green Corridor), Nicola Dawson (Somerset Council) and Stephen Tate (Wellington Town Council). Each gave presentations on their work in the community, to make everyone aware. The Chair of the Highways Working Group gave a report for 2025. The Chair reported on the bus improvements in the area, including numbers 22, 25 and the restored number 27 bus, which includes West Buckland. Additionally, it was reported that the Slinky service will also see improvements, with the booking time reduced to one hour before travel and the introduction of an app for booking.
- An overview was given of the closure of M5 junction 26 for the tarmac replacement of the 1974 concrete surface to include the dual carriageway to Chelston roundabout.
- Small Parishes subgroup - Cllr Jeremy Toye, Nynehead Parish Council and Cllr Simon Bellamy, West Buckland Parish Council highlighted some of the common and similar issues shared by smaller Parish Council.
- 21/01/25 meeting at the Beambridge Inn. Updates from the Public Community Transport Group which is looking to increase services to local villages. Highways Working Group Report: Councils engaging with contractors.
- Cross LCN Travel Group: to be established so they can address across LCN Areas.

Somerset Local plan: This is where Somerset Council is to create a draft long-term change and building plan this year to be adopted after numerous consultations and reviewed by 2028. The plan will include Housing, shops, health, transport, social and heritage design.

Community Emergency Parish Plan: West Buckland Council is considering doing one. 23/09/24 LCN meeting at Wellington Rugby and Football Club. The Public and Community Transport Working Group reported progress of restoring bus service 25 – Wiveliscombe to Taunton service and others. The Slinky bus and service was promoted within our LCN. SALC Health & Wellbeing Programme: Frodo Higginson presented and promoted initiatives in Somerset to address various wellbeing issues. Following this Cllr Bellamy contacted the local Village agent, Jacqui Young to determine the wellbeing needs in West Buckland with a view to better see if the Council could help. The outcome was that the Village Agents had this largely covered but we had created a point of contact for future use.

11/06/24 at Wiveliscombe Rugby Club saw the LCN AGM for 2023-24. The Annual report was created and published last year.

- 10. Report from West Buckland Primary School, Nursery and PTFA.** Mr Mann, Headteacher, gave a report on activities at the school. There is an active PTFA and a thriving nursery. Every term, every class goes on a trip and there is a music week. Children take part in cycling proficiency. Oracy and numeracy are a focus. The children access the Church and work with the Village Hall Committee and the Parish Council.
- 11. Report from West Buckland Village Hall Committee.** Mrs Harding reported on another year that had gone so quickly. I took over from Helene Perry as Chair in April 2024 as she was unwell and receiving treatment. We sadly lost Helene in October, she is very much missed, especially by me, as she and Andrew were also personal friends.

We started the year with our New Years Eve Party. Live music was provided by Rod Thomas and Potters of Wellington provided us with an excellent ploughman's supper at a very reasonable cost. Tickets were £5 per head.

In June the Parish Council kindly donated an official picture of King Charles III which now hangs in the Committee Room. The kitchen boiler was replaced in July and the new one seems to be working well. We received a quote to replace the existing pedestrian gate but to date this has not been done.

Pub Nights have continued to be an excellent fund raiser for the hall. In the winter months numbers of participants dropped slightly, maybe due to the colder, wet weather. Grateful thanks to Adrian for continuing to organise these nights, also his band of helpers. We looked into the possibility of holding film nights at the hall but after looking into this carefully, decided it would not be viable.

Our first big event of the year was the Summer Fair in June, once again run in conjunction with West Buckland School PTFA. The field was a hive of activity with an array of vintage vehicles and tractors, a dog show, many stalls, games and refreshments. Once again we were blessed with lovely weather and enjoyed a successful day, running into the evening with a fish and chip supper and music by The Bird Dogs. From this event we were able to give donations to Wellington 1<sup>st</sup> Scouts, who loaned us their marquee, St Mary's Church who provided refreshments and of course West Buckland Primary School. Grateful thanks go to everyone who contributed in so many ways to this event. It couldn't happen without you.

The acoustic clouds were becoming damaged, so to solve the problem the Woolly Shepherd were asked to raise them, which seems to have worked well.

Grateful thanks to the Parish Council for dealing so swiftly with the visit we had from the 'travellers' this month – within two days they were evicted. A costly exercise but I feel it saved more damage and cleaning costs being involved. Moving forward we are looking into an 'online ' booking system through Hallmaster, which will be in line with most local village halls. This will include setting up our own Village Hall website.

**12. Report from West Buckland Church.** No report.

**13. Any other matters brought forward.** None.

The meeting closed at 8pm.

## Appendix A.

### West Buckland Parish Council Accounts 2024-25

	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
Opening Balance at 1st April		
Unity Trust Current Account	1000.00	1000.00
Unity Trust Instant Access Account	16300.26	23755.55
<b>Total Opening Balance</b>	<b>17300.26</b>	<b>24755.55</b>
<b>Receipts</b>		
Precept	11,782.00	10888.00
Vat Refund	525.58	3861.65
Bank Interest	600.42	534.18
Playing Field Grant	0.00	735.00
Churchyard Grant	0.00	800.00
Footpath Grant	0.00	170.00
Other grants/donations	40.00	200.00
CIL	1,947.81	0.00
EV Charging Point	138.30	162.20
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>15,034.11</b>	<b>17351.03</b>
<b>Payments</b>		
Clerks salary	4,222.01	4179.56
Mileage	118.80	216.00
Playing Field	1,838.79	9976.96
Insurance	599.00	555.38
Admin	306.42	370.85
Footpaths	670.00	480.00
Subscriptions	391.86	360.11
Room hire	168.00	154.00
Miscellaneous	161.79	1260.00
Village Grass Cutting	550.00	440.00
S137	50.00	0.00
Grants	1,400.00	1400.00
Dog bins	406.64	381.16
Training	100.00	25.00
Website	0.00	0.00

Memorial Trough	0.00	0.00
CIL	0.00	1987.27
Defibrillator	313.73	108.95
EV Charging point	155.19	140.00
Vat (reclaimable)	498.97	2770.88
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>11,951.20</b>	<b>24806.12</b>
<b>Opening Balance + receipts - payments</b>	<b>20,383.17</b>	<b>17300.46</b>
Unity Trust Bank Current Account 31st March	1000.00	1000.00
Unpresented transactions	0.00	0.00
Current Account cleared balance	1000.00	1000.00
Unity Trust Bank Instant Access Account	19383.17	16300.26
<b>Total Closing Balance at 31st March</b>	<b>20383.17</b>	<b>17300.26</b>
Total Earmarked Reserves	7426.59	<b>5478.78</b>
Total General Reserves	<b>12956.58</b>	<b>11821.68</b>

Signed:  
Chair

Date: