

WEST BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

www.westbuckland.org

The Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 25th November 2025 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: One member of the public and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe

- 108/11/25. To receive apologies for absence.** The Chair welcomed Mrs Francis-Bellamy, a prospective councillor. Apologies were accepted from Cllr Bellamy. Apologies were received from Cllr Wakefield, Somerset Council.
- 109/11/25. Disclosure of interest in items on the agenda.** Cllr Silverlight declared a person and prejudicial interest in item 119/11/25 c) as he had submitted an expense claim.
- 110/11/25. Co-option of a Councillor.** This item was deferred to later in the meeting.
- 111/11/25. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 28/10/25 as an accurate record of the meeting.** The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and duly signed by the Chair.
- 112/11/25. Matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda (for information only).** No matters arising.
- 113/11/25. Report from Somerset Councillors.** A written report from Cllr Wakefield was circulated by email earlier in the month.
- 114/11/25. Democratic Period.** The member of the public confirmed she had no matters to raise and was attending as a prospective councillor.
- 115/11/25. To continue to discuss broadband issues in the parish.** Gideon Amos MP has emailed to give an update on his continuing efforts to secure full fibre broadband for communities across the constituency, following the descopeing of Airband's contract under Phase 2 of the Superfast Broadband Programme in October 2024. He has pressed the Minister for Telecoms and Building Digital UK (BDUK) to ensure that the 28,000+ premises abandoned by Airband are included in an Openreach contract under Project Gigabit. In January 2025, the Minister assured him that these premises would be incorporated into the Openreach rollout and that a schedule would be published before the end of 2025. Despite this promise, recent correspondence from Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) and Openreach suggests that neither organisation is currently aware of this commitment. This has led to confusion and frustration on the ground. For example, residents in Churchstanton have been advised to pursue voucher-led Fibre Community Partnerships (FCPs), only to discover that Openreach is no longer accepting new registrations and that funding is unavailable. To clarify the situation, he tabled a Written Parliamentary Question (WPQ 83622) to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology on 20 October. The response was disappointing and contradicted earlier assurances that a rollout schedule would be published before the end of this year. He is now

seeking urgent clarification on:

1. Delay in Contract Amendment. Why has the Openreach contract amendment been delayed, and what is the current status of the amendment process?
2. Progress to Date. How many of the 28,000 descoped premises have already been successfully connected by other suppliers using voucher project proposals under the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme?
3. Tracking and Oversight. Is a definitive record being maintained of all premises still awaiting connection, to ensure that none are overlooked in future delivery plans?
4. Rollout Schedule. When will a clear, address-level rollout schedule be published for the remaining unconnected premises?
5. Fallback Delivery Options for premises not yet connected, will new voucher-funded projects and commercial market delivery still be considered or relied upon?
6. Coordination and Communication. What steps are being taken to ensure full alignment between BDUK, CDS and Openreach so that affected communities receive accurate and timely information?

He has promised to raise these concerns in the House at the earliest opportunity to keep the pressure on and ensure that rural communities are not left behind. He has asked for any updates or concerns from the parishes involved so he can reflect them in his representations.

Councillors felt this response was very uninspiring and are aware that the planned switch off of analogue phone lines (copper lines) by January 2027 is getting closer without anything in place for descoped premises.

116/11/25. 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.

46/25/0025/NMA Application for a Non-Material Amendment to application 46/21/0037 to amend the wording of Condition No's, 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18, 20, 21, 2224 to insert wording relating to the phasing of development on land at Chelston Heath, Wellington. Decision: conditional approval. It was noted that phosphate planning regulations for wetlands have effectively changed in England, primarily through updated guidance and new legal duties under the nutrient neutrality framework

c) CIL liable development at the Merry Harriers, Blackdown Hill Road, West Buckland: Councillors noted the request from Somerset Council Planning Obligations to keep an eye on this site for commencement of works regarding demolition of outbuildings and erection of replacement Public House. If the commencement of any work is seen this will be reported.

d) Pre consultation CTIL 12540130 Manleys Chicken Farm. Cllr Wakefield had written to the developer with some questions and she had shared the responses with councillors. This is an extension to an existing mast to provide 5G. The proposed works do not require planning permission, instead the site benefits from permitted development as it does exceed the permitted height or width. The existing height is currently 11.20m and the proposal is to increase the overall to a top height of 15.20m. A previous application was for something higher. The rural area does need better coverage so councillors did not feel they could

complain. It should not be about giving a better service to Wellington and the services on the M5. Consideration should be given to making a more formal off road parking area for maintenance vehicles.

e) Any other planning matters. No other planning matters.

117/11/25. Highways.

a) To note any required work to be reported to SC. Notice has been received of a temporary road closure for part of West Buckland Road on 16th December 2025 to last for 6 hours (09:30 - 15:30) to enable Wessex Water to carry out permanent reinstatement works.

b) To receive an update on outstanding highways work (Kerb at Dyers Close and drainage in Silver Street. The Clerk has emailed Gwyn Hughes once more with no response yet again. This will be followed up and the Somerset Councillors included.

c) Correspondence from Gideon Amos MP - Pedestrian & Cycle Access to Foxmoor Business Park Wellington. This was covered at the last meeting.

d) Possible alternative to Chapter 8 training in order to take the SID project further. The Clerk reported that a Clerk in another nearby parish has arranged for councillors to undertake online Highways Safety Training in order to move their SIDs rather than having to complete Chapter 8 training. The Clerk will contact Kate Brown to check if West Buckland councillors can do the same.

e) to consider a request from Syed Shah for feedback following the M5 Junction 26 Chelston Link improvement works. Initially there was too little information, too late which led to angst in the community. Once Syed got on board he talked to people and answered their questions and things improved. Councillors felt a good job had been done on the road but it was a shame that funding only provided like for like replacement which meant more couldn't be done. It felt like it had been a missed opportunity to provide a path and/or a cycleway.

f) To discuss potential Active Travel Routes as discussed by the Wellington & Wiveliscombe LCN and provide feedback. Information had been circulated. It was felt that other developments should contribute towards a path from Wellington to Foxmoor.

g) Update on the cost of street lighting on the road from the A38 to Ham. Brandon Mora, Highways Lighting and Electrical Assets Team Somerset Council has replied to the Clerk to say that having consulted with his Senior Engineer and looking into the installation of additional lighting from the A38 to Cob Castle, it will not be feasible to provide lighting all the way as there is no footpath from Castle Cottages turning to the entrance of Cob Castle so they cannot encourage pedestrians to walk along the main road and possibly in harm's way. They also cannot provide lighting in Castle Cottages to the cut through footpath as this road appears to be a private road. The only advice he could give is to look into the possibility of a minor improvement scheme. He suggested asking for a footpath and lighting to be investigated for pedestrians up to the entrance to Cob Castle.

h) Any other highways matters. The Council were told that improvements were going to be made to the A38/Silver Street junction at the Worlds End because the Orchard Grove development had reached a certain stage. As nothing has happened enquiries will be made to find out what is happening. The new manager at the Worlds End has said they will keep their sign back to prevent it blocking visibility at the junction.

118/11/25. 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	2526/47
Mr N Richards	£60.00	Grass cutting in village	2526/48
Jill Larcombe	£345.29	Clerk's salary & expenses for November	2526/49
HM Revenue & Customs	£58.00	PAYE for October	2526/50
West Buckland Village Hall Trust	£70.00	Hire of Committee Room	2526/51
West Buckland Village Hall Trust	£94.93	Electricity used by EV Charger	2526/52

Since the last meeting a bank service charge of £6.00 was paid from the account on 31st October. A bank service charge of £6.00 will be paid on 30th November and 31st December 2025..

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.

b) To note any receipts since the last meeting and the bank accounts balances. No receipts since the last meeting. The current account balance is £1243.77 and the Instant Access Account balance is £19470.84.

c) Bank reconciliation 31.10.25. The bank reconciliation was checked by Cllr Paul and documents were signed.

d) To start to discuss the budget for 2026-27. The Clerk will produce a draft budget for discussion at the meeting on 6th January.

119/11/25. Playing Field:

a) Any points to note from the regular inspection. Cllr Bellamy has emailed the Clerk a copy of his report for November. There were no points to note.

b) Update on the purchase of a 'Police' approved secure key safe.

The Clerk reported that she couldn't book an installation of the secure key safe through the details approved at the last meeting as the company didn't cover the West Buckland area. It was agreed the secure key safe would be ordered by the Clerk and a local locksmith asked to fit it.

c) To minute the replacement of a chain and padlocks provided by Cllr Silverlight for the playing field. Cllr Silverlight declared a personal and prejudicial interest and took no part in the discussion. An expenses claim of £ from Cllr Silverlight for two padlocks and a length of chain was approved. These were purchased to replace two padlocks and chain provided by Cllr Silverlight to stop the swings being used for safety reasons. These were lost when the swings were replaced (Payment ref: 2526/53).

d) Any other playing field matters. During a recent storm, trees on the southern playing field hedge have fallen against telephone wires. Cllr Silverlight noted there was a wire dangling down on fencing. Ben Dearsley, a recommended tree surgeon, has been engaged to remove the trees at a cost of £380 plus VAT. As this work needed to be done urgently because of the risk of them falling further there was not time to get three quotes.

- 120/11/25. Footpaths: any footpath matters.** The Clerk emailed Peter Hobley, Somerset Council Service Managed Public Rights of Way about the broken and hazardous Stile (Asset 44108) on Footpath WG14/30 on 21st October but has not had a reply. Councillors agreed this was unacceptable. This will be followed up and the Somerset Councillors included.
- 121/11/25. Update on reconnection of EV Charging Point to wi-fi.** A member of the Village Hall Committee has checked the cable that was disconnected from the old router but unfortunately it will not reach the new router. The Treasurer will be asked to get back in touch with Hydra, to either look at the antenna or putting in a new cable at the Village Hall Committees expense.
- 122/11/25. Update on setting up a regular monthly meeting for older members of the parish and adoption of a Safeguarding Policy.** Cllr Moore updated councillors on plans for a regular Talking Café at the Village Hall. Cllr Mrs Moore will be the formal leader and she has arranged to use the main hall in the Village Hall once a month, free of charge. She has been liaising with the Village Agent and they will print promotional leaflet for circulation. The first one will take place on Wednesday 29th January 2026 from 12.30pm to 3.00pm. Cllr Ms Drury volunteered to help and mentioned some other volunteers. The Clerk will find a template for a Safeguarding Policy.
The Village Hall is moving to the Hall Master Booking system.
- 123/11/25. Progress with recruiting more councillors.** An application for co-option was received earlier in the day and will be considered at the meeting on 6th January. Further efforts will be made to recruit a councillor to fill the other vacancy. The five year term of this Council will come to an end in early May 2027 and some councillors are considering standing down at that point. It is important to have enough councillors willing to continue to be able to have a quorate council.
- 124/11/25. Correspondence.** There was no further correspondence.
- 125/11/25. Any urgent business at the Chairman's discretion (Not for Decisions).** No urgent business.
- 126/11/25. To note the date of the next meeting.** The next meeting will be held on 6th January 2026.

Signed:
Chair

Date: