

BUCKLAND ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

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Chairman: Councillor Neal Parsons

Parish Clerk: Mrs S Coombe

Public Session

The Minutes

The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of Buckland St Mary Parish Council held at The Village Hall on Thursday 26th February 2026 when the following business was conducted.

Members Present

Councillors I Farmer, A Rich, K Every, R Barton, K Albon & L Wood.

In Attendance

Clerk, Mrs S Coombe & Councillor Kenton.

2025/95 To receive apologies for non-attendance

Apologies were received from Councillor N Parsons, in his absence Councillor Farmer chaired the meeting & Councillor Wale.

2025/96 To receive declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2025/97 To receive & approve the Minutes of the last Parish Council meeting on 29th January 2026

Minutes were received & approved by all councillors.

2025/98 Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising from previous minutes.

2025/99 Somerset Councillor Kenton reported that Somerset Council will set its budget on Wednesday, including a proposed 4.99% Council Tax rise. If agreed, the average Band D property will pay £1,950.30. This remains below the average for unitary councils and lower than Dorset and Cornwall. However, because Somerset started from a lower base, percentage increases alone cannot close the gap. Even with the rise, the Council still faces a £25 million shortfall. Further savings will be required, and the Council may need Government approval to borrow or sell assets to cover day-to-day costs—an approach that cannot continue indefinitely. The Government's recent Fair Funding Review has removed the "remoteness factor", which recognised the higher cost of delivering services in rural counties. Somerset is expected to lose around £21 million, the third-largest reduction nationally. On SEND, the Government will write off 90% of historic deficits, but rising demand continues to create major pressures. Over 638,000 children now have EHCPs, and 99% of tribunals are upheld, requiring councils to fund placements and transport. National reforms are promised. Somerset has secured £1 million from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero for the Warm Homes Local Grant Scheme, adding to the Council's existing £6 million programme. Grants (means-tested) can fund insulation, air-source heat pumps and other energy-saving measures. Residents can check eligibility by searching "Warm Homes" on the Council website. Finally, the email generalenquiries@somerset.gov.uk is being phased out and will no longer be monitored. Residents should now use the Contact Us section of the Somerset Council website.

2025/100 Finance

- i. The following payments were approved for payment:

BSM Village Hall Hire – 29/1/2026	£16.40
Microsoft 365 – 2025	£54.99
Microsoft 365 - 2026	£84.99

S137 Grant – Fobs	£300.00
S137 Grant – Buckland & Bishopswood Cricket Club	£300.00
S137 Grant – Bishopswood Short Mat Bowls	£200.00
Clerks Salary & Expenses – February 2026	£469.82

ii. Bank Reconciliation – January 2026

The clerk shared the bank reconciliation up to the end of January 2026 with all councillors.

iii. S137 Grants

The clerk reported that she had received 2 applications for consideration of an S137 Grant. Councillors agreed to fund some setup costs for the BSM Flower Show Society but decided against granting funds to Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance.

2025/101 Fixed Asset Register

Councillors agreed the draft Fixed Asset Register.

2025/102 Ramblers 2026 Project: Potential Rights of Way for BSM Parish

Councillors discussed this project & concluded that the red Category 2 paths show no evidence of being walked or functioning as footpaths, and that path 50622 has been superseded by another route. Regarding the green Category 1 paths, Buckland St Mary Parish Council do not wish to submit applications for inclusion on the definitive map & will report this to Somerset Ramblers Area Footpath Officer.

2025/103 Litter Picking

Councillor Wood proposed organising a village litter pick and will carry out research into its organisation.

2025/104 Parish Matters

The clerk thanked Liz Marshall for her work on the Christmas lights, and she proposed Friday 20th November 2026 at 7pm for the next switch-on.

Councillor Farmer reported Potholes on Brooms Lane & Newtown Lane. Clerk to report.

2025/105 There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.20pm. The next meeting will take place on Thursday 2nd April 2026.

N Parsons - Chair
2nd April 2026

S Coombe – Clerk