

CHURCHILL AND BLAKEDOWN PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES

Minutes of the Meeting of Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council held on Tuesday 13th January 2026 at Blakedown Sports Pavilion which commenced at 7.00p.m.

PRESENT: Chair: Cllr Hession; Cllrs, Mark Adams; Richard Benney; Sue Fowler; Bryony Hayward; Martin Hickman; Claire Wood.

In attendance: 50+ residents; WCC – Robert Stepniewski; County Councillor – Marcus Hart; District Councillors – Robin Drew; Ian Hardiman; Parish Clerk – Louise Harris.

1/26 Chair’s Opening Remarks: Happy new year to everyone and I hope you had a good Christmas. We Have lots to get through this meeting.

2/26 Apologies: None.

3/26 Declarations of Interest: None.

4/26 Community Policing:

- a) **To receive report from the Beat Officer/CSO** – The monthly report had been received by the clerk and circulated to all councillors, and it was displayed at the meeting. The chairman noted that there was only one incident of note in the immediate area and commented that there was a large spate of burglaries this time last year.

The meeting was adjourned for **Public Participation**, notes of which are attached at the end of these Minutes. Cllr Sue Fowler left the meeting and participated from the public gallery due to being a resident of the area being discussed.

Cllr Fowler rejoined the meeting when reconvened.

5/26 Dispensations: None.

6/26 Minutes: A member proposed approval of the minutes of the meeting held on the 8th December 2025 and the minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record. Due to the absence of the minutes, the clerk will provide them to be signed at the next meeting.

7/26 District and County Council Matters: The reports had been received by the clerk and circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting and were displayed at the meeting. Cllr Hart spoke briefly on the following:-

- the situation with the wheelie bins that had been missed in Blakedown will be addressed tomorrow and residents are to leave them out.
- disappointment at the temporary lights again on the A456 and said he is enquiring with WCC about this.
- Another 2x road traffic collisions at Stakenbridge Lane have occurred and he will address full council as a more strategic solution is required.

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- A tree in Belbroughton Road will be addressed.

No questions were asked and the parish council thanked Cllrs: Hart, Drew and Hardiman for attending.

8/26 Traffic Issues: Update on Highways developments and on speed control measures: None.

9/26 Items for consideration:

- To agree the budget for 2026/27 – The clerk had shared the draft budget for the year 26/27 with members prior to the meeting, supported by the Q3 finance report, reserves statement and precept calculations based on the up-to-date tax base of 811. Operating costs for the year are set out to be £57,881. This does not include estimated costs of £7100 over five budget lines being covered by reserves earmarked for their purpose. Receipts forecast to arrive from supplementary income streams total £7950 leaving a deficit of £49,931. Calculations based on a precept the same as the current year at £52,750 gave a forecast surplus of £2819. The budget was displayed on the screen and Cllr Wood asked that the training budget line be extended by £1000 to cover the cost of the clerk undertaking CiLCA. Following questions and discussions regarding forthcoming devolution and its potential effects on future costs, and previous discussions that took place as part of the working party meeting, members concluded to **AGREE** with the budget as displayed subject to an increase in the training budget line and the resulting reduction in the forecast surplus to £1819.
- To agree the precept for 2026/27 – It was **AGREED** not to increase in the precept for 26/27 given that the forecast general reserves position for the close of 25/26 is £42,484. The precept will remain at £52,750 for the year and with the tax base being 811, this will mean that there will be a reduction in cost for an average Band D property of 16p per annum – a decrease of 0.25%.
- To agree on the level of General Reserves to be held by the Council, equal to between 3 and 12 months of Net Revenue Expenditure, for 2026-2027 – The clerk had presented the figures to the members in the finance reports stated in a) above. After a short discussion, it was **AGREED** that the maximum level of General Reserves to be held by the council will be capped at 9 months of the 26/27 net revenue expenditure, £58,881 making the limit £44,161. The clerk and working party were thanked for their work on this by the chairman.
- To resolve the co-option of a councillor and to agree that the co-opted councillor can sign the declaration of acceptance of office outside of the meetings and witnessed by the clerk – members **RESOLVED** unanimously to co-opt Gillian Moncrieff onto the council with the acceptance of office being signed outside of a meeting.
- To agree to delegate contract tender evaluation to the Clerk, in consultation with Cllrs. Fowler & Hayward during w/c 26th January 2026 – after a short explanation of this item by the clerk, this item was **AGREED**.

10/26 Items for Information:

- To receive the minutes of the Villages Trust meeting held on the 23 October 2025 and note the update from the meeting with the Historical Society on the 17th December 2025 – It was acknowledged that the Historical Society is in the process of winding up and the question was asked what happens with the Signal Box and that this is up for discussion at the Villages Trust meeting next week.

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11/26 Planning and Development Control:

a) Planning Application received:

- i) 25/0929/TEL - Land Adjacent To, Communication Station 1493130, Harborough Farm, Birmingham Road - Installation of a 30m high FLI Slimline Climable Lattice Tower with 6No. Antenna Apertures, 4No. Dishes, 2No. GPS Units and ancillary equipment, and associated works – No objection.
- ii) 25/0939/TCA - Churchill Court, Churchill Lane, Churchill - Silver Birch Tree - Fell and Mixed Trees - Crown lift to 4 metres – No comment - defer to the tree officer at WFDC.
- iii) 25/0908/S73 – Grazings, Churchill Lane – Variation of Conditions 2 (External Materials) and 3 (Approved Plans) attached to planning approval ref: 23/0288/HOU – No objection providing the proposed development is consistent with the requirements of a conservation area.
- iv) 25/0867/HOU - 48 Birmingham Road - Extension to existing dropped kerb – No objection.

b) Additional Planning Applications or other Planning Matters:

- i) **Neighbourhood Plan Review update** – Cllr Fowler reported that the design code had been received and was sent back to the consultants with corrections, but more work is required. Once the document is then received back, it will be circulated to members for viewing and comments and shown to WFDC for their comments and acceptance.

c) Planning Notifications:

- a. 25/0240/CR - Land At Os 388200 278800 Station - PARTIALLY CONFIRMS COMPLIANCE of: Discharge of Condition 3 (Planting Scheme), Condition 4 (Boundary Treatment) and Condition 15 (Hedgerow Enhancements) of Approved Application 24/0556/RES.
- b. 25/0967/CLP - Woodfield House , 93 Belbroughton Road - Erection of eight-bay garage building – [FOR INFORMATION ONLY] – The council are concerned that this is a huge development and the premises are being used for unauthorized commercial purposes.

Action: The clerk was asked to email the planning officer sharing concerns.

12/26 Financial Report and Payment of Accounts:

- a) To note the **bank balances as at 7th January, 2026:**
£22,713.71 - Unity Trust Treasurers Account (PC Current Account)
£37,709.39 - Lloyds Business Instant Access Account (PC Reserves)
£25.50 - Lloyds Community Account
£60,448.60 in TOTAL AT THE BANK – NOTED.
- b) To approve and sign the Receipts & Payment Schedule for January 2026 – **APPROVED & SIGNED.**
- c) To approve and sign the bank reconciliation with supporting bank statements to 7th January 2026 – **APPROVED & SIGNED.**
- d) To receive the Finance update for Qtr 3 – 2025-26 – **RECEIVED.**

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e) To receive the Financial Reserves Statement to 07/01/2026 – **RECEIVED.**

13/26 Clerk's Report: The clerk had circulated the report to all prior to the meeting and was displayed at the meeting and a few comments made.

14/26 Councillor's Reports and items for future agendas: None.

15/26 Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 10th February 2026 commencing at 7.00 p.m.

Meeting closed at 21.30.

Signed.....

(Chair to Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council)

Dated – 10th February 2026.

Brief notes of Public Participation – 13th January 2026

Many Churchill & Blakedown residents attended the session which had been arranged by Cllr Marcus Hart to engage residents with WCC and Openreach regarding the pole build for gigabit broadband in the parish. Some roads had been withdrawn from the build due to objections to poles, these were: Wannerton Road, Brookside Way, Elm Drive, Mill Lane and Mill Close. Unfortunately, due to a family funeral, Aaron Fladgley from Openreach could not attend.

Cllr Hart opened the session giving a summary of the situation. There were many questions and statements made by residents, addressed by Robert Stepniewski from WCC who gave a compelling presentation on the position of Openreach as regards an underground installation. Due to the absence of an alternative underground installation and despite some residents still not being in favour of the poles, most felt that they are willing to accept the poles rather than lose the opportunity of getting full fibre to the property. WCC clearly stated that there were no other installers willing to build in the parish, that Openreach will not install underground because there isn't the budget or appropriate approved method of build; the existing network will remain, but it is degrading and will not have any further improvements made to it.

The lengthy session concluded with a proposal from the residents of the withdrawn area to undertake a final survey so that all residents, including those not represented at the session, could state if they wanted to have FTTP or not with the pros and cons clearly laid out. The residents would need to have the survey results with WCC by the end of the week in the hope that they could be put back into the build if the results were supportive of this.

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