

Minutes of the **WITHYHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING** held **VIRTUALLY/REMOTELY** on 14th December 2020 at 7.30pm in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

PRESENT Cllrs Nick Anderson, Andrew Fane, Robert Gordon-James, Diana Kelly (Chair), Keith Obbard (as District Councillor for item 6), Jill Pardey, Chris Pope, Marcus Tarling, Paul Watkins, Linsey Winter

In attendance: Deborah Siddle, Clerk (minutes and virtual host)
County Councillor Whetstone (to item 8)

Members of the public wishing to address any items on the agenda are able to join the meeting and were requested to email their question/comment by the morning of the meeting. There were no members of the public in attendance.

1. ENQUIRE WHETHER ANYONE PRESENT INTENDS TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH AND/OR RECORD THE MEETING: Recorded by Clerk for purposes of minutes, will be destroyed when minutes are written.

2. APOLOGIES – District Cllr Hardy

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – None.

4. MINUTES

4.1. To resolve that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday 9th November 2020 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

001989 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2020 were approved.

4.2. Matters arising

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 1935	Clerk	Noticeboard positions considered at November F&A
Pg. 2016	GMS	Timetable of actions based on WPC [and WDC] decisions not provided by GMS. WPC currently working with solicitor on lease
Pg. 2017	Clerk	Draft policy regarding WPC's treatment of its own planning applications to January Council
Pg. 2127	Clerk	St John's ditches now cleared and Highways Coordinator assessing the requirements for the path
Pg. 2149	Clerk	Suitable position for the oil lamp identified by the Clerk, awaiting contract to install
Pg. 2149	Cllrs Winter and Obbard	Spoken about Speedwatch volunteers (speeding at Corseley Road and Station Road, Groombridge)
Pg. 2155	Clerk	Information from WDC Climate Action Day circulated

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Pg. 2163	Cllr Obbard	Cllr Tarling to anchor the tables at Balls Green Community Space
Pg. 2166	Clerks	Assistant Clerk and Highways Coordinator working with East Sussex Highways to assign ownership of land to ESCC to repair pot-holes at the parish office
Pg. 2166	Clerk	Reasons for keeping Groombridge play area closed on signage
Pg. 2166	Councillors	TPOs on Planning agenda, Cllrs Kelly and Pardey compiling locations
Pg. 2167	Clerk	Balls Green Community Space outdoor gym equipment quotes to next Agenda
Pg. 2167	Clerk	District Cllr Hardy notified of complaints regarding Go Wild
Pg. 2167	Clerk	GMS notified that they can proceed with trial digs and some ground clearance
Pg. 2167	Clerk	Chair of RoW notified that Council support the diversion proposal for FP57a
Pg. 2167	Councillors	Draft 2021-24 Parish Plan out for consultation
Pg. 2168	Clerk	WDC has removed the Groombridge recycling facility
Pg. 2168	Clerk	Renamed 'Tree Surgery' budget 'Trees'
Pg. 2169	Clerk	Accepted the quote provided by Company A for SID pole installation, and arrange oil lamp install
Pg. 2169	Clerk	Purchased tablet for use with SID
Pg. 2170	Clerk	Adopted the Investments Strategy
Pg. 2170	Clerk	Adopted the Risk Assessment and management Policy
Pg. 2170	Clerk	Adopted the Pensions Policy

Actions outstanding from previous minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2067	Clerk	Enquire whether the Crime Audit Officer can assess Withyham and Blackham
Pg. 2104	Councillors	Consider Committee vacancies when live committee meetings resume
Pg. 2105	Clerk	Plant a small walnut tree at Newton Willows
Pg. 2149	Assistant Clerk	Promote grant for Blackham Watch CCTV camera and signage in next WPC newsletter
Pg. 2163	Clerk	Resident interested in looking after Park Corner Pond contacting Clerk to arrange meeting. Cllr Kelly to attend

Pg. 2163	Clerks	Publicise that more Speedwatch volunteers are needed
Pg. 2167	Clerk	Provide a defibrillator and its installation at Blackham Village Hall if BVH committee supports this
Pg. 2167	Cllr Pardey	Enquire whether St John's school could put someone forward for the councillor vacancy
Pg. 2170	Councillors	Notify Cllr Obbard of sites where more trees might be planted in the parish

- Assistant Clerk will arrange thank you gifts for COVID-19 volunteers instead of annual Unsung Helpers gifts

Actions from these Minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2192	Assistant Clerk	Arrange thank you gifts for COVID-19 volunteers
Pg. 2193	Clerk	Permit St Thomas' Church to organise carol singing on Groombridge Recreation Ground
Pg. 2193	Assistant Clerk	Circulate a message via social media that the recycling facility is no longer at Groombridge car park
Pg. 2194	Councillor	Contact Clerk if willing to organise a volunteer group to plant trees
Pg. 2194	Clerk	Reopen Balls Green Community Space when bin is removed, signage added, fence mended and tables fixed
Pg. 2194	Councillors	Review WPC website and make suggestions
Pg. 2196	Clerk	Accept the quote for urban verge cuts
Pg. 2196	Clerk	Adopt the bullying/Harassment policy
Pg. 2196	Clerk	Adopt the Dignity at Work policy
Pg. 2196	Clerk	Adopt the Equal Opportunities policy
Pg. 2196	Clerk	Adopt the Recruitment policy
Pg. 2196	Clerk	Adopt the Capability policy
Pg. 2196	Assistant Clerk	Include resident feedback in the process for the Balls Green Community Space exercise equipment

5. COMMITTEE MINUTES

To receive the following minutes of committees and to approve and confirm recommendations contained therein and as far as requisite, the action taken by them.

5.1 Planning Committee – 23rd November 2020

001990 **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Planning Committee of 23rd November 2020

To receive the following draft minutes of committees and to note recommendations contained therein and as far as requisite, the action taken by them – none

6. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT and COUNTY COUNCILLORS

County Cllr Whetstone reported that the Director of Public Health for East Sussex is concerned about the increase in COVID-19 cases and has appealed to residents to take the utmost care.

ESCC is awaiting confirmation of how much they will receive from Government in 2021/22 and will then confirm their budget.

District Cllr Hardy had provided a written report to explain that WDC in its budget for 2021/22 Council Tax will remain the same, and staff and members' salaries will be frozen for 12 months.

District Cllr Obbard notified the meeting that WDC's Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been updated and details are available on the website.

A new consultation on the future of Leisure Services in Wealden starts on 16th December, and the consultation on the Local Plan is continuing until the New Year.

WDC has promoted two schemes to help residents to reduce their Carbon Footprints; the Solar Together joint buying scheme for solar panels and storage batteries, and the Green Homes Grant scheme. An application is being considered by WDC Planning for a solar powered station to charge cars on the Uckfield bypass.

Cllr Obbard was asked about the timescale for implementation of the Wealden Local Plan, and the issue of planning appeals until this is in place. Cllr Obbard confirmed that much work undertaken for the last draft plan remains relevant and that the new Government White Paper indicated that Local Plans should be completed in an even tighter timescale of 2.5 years. The imposition of Government housing numbers by algorithms continues to be an issue, with Wealden expected to build three times more houses each year than previously.

7. WARD REPORTS

(a) Groombridge Ward (Groombridge) – to include request from St Thomas' Church for carol singing on Groombridge Recreation Ground

A request had been received from St Thomas' Church for carol singing on Groombridge Recreation Ground on 20th December. The Clerk confirmed that they would be required to undertake their own risk assessments and have insurance in place.

001991 RESOLVED to agree to St Thomas' Church organising carol singing on Groombridge Recreation Ground on 20th December.

Since the recycling centre had been removed from Groombridge car park there had been an incidence of fly tipping. A message would be circulated via social media that the facility is no longer there.

(b) Groombridge Ward (Withyham/Blackham)

Cllr Obbard had been approached by a resident wishing to plant trees on their land. There are trees available from the Woodland Trust but he had asked if funding is available for other costs such as rabbit guards.

The Clerk confirmed that WPC would have to review the grants guidelines to fund private individuals as only groups benefitting people in the parish are eligible currently. One councillor suggested a volunteer organisation

that may be able to give advice and support. It was also suggested that residents may wish to assist in planting. It was AGREED that any councillor wishing to organise a volunteer group on this should contact the Clerk.

(c) Marden's Hill Ward – nothing to report.

Cllr Whetstone left the meeting.

8. GROOMBRIDGE POST OFFICE – update

The Clerk had circulated an update paper prior to the meeting, and this was noted. The Clerk confirmed that WPC currently awaits the Post Office Ltd contract and the Public Works Loan confirmation in order to proceed to next steps.

Concerns were raised by a councillor not present at the previous meeting about the way that negotiations have been carried out. The Clerk confirmed that procedurally all decision-making and actions have been correctly undertaken, and this was clarified and reiterated by other councillors present who did not support the assertion that a renegotiation should take place.

It was reported that a member of the public had spoken with two Councillors about the purchase price. Councillors were reminded that at this time this remains confidential information. It was reported that the vast majority of comments received by the parish office and Councillors from residents about saving Groombridge Post Office have been positive.

9. BALLS GREEN COMMUNITY SPACE - Risk assessment for re-opening

A risk assessment had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Clerk noted that custom and practise amongst the majority of other councils had been to re-open their play areas with signage requesting that users follow Covid-19 procedures. Councillors considered the report and recommended that the bin is removed and signage added to instruct people to take their litter home. The Clerk also confirmed that a fence needs to be mended and the tables fixed.

001992 RESOLVED to reopen Balls Green Community Space in the new year when the above actions are complete.

The Clerk confirmed that Groombridge play area remains closed because of safety reasons.

10. WEBSITE UPDATE

The meeting was updated that the new website, meeting latest accessibility requirements, is now live. Councillors were asked to review the website and make any suggestions. The Assistant Clerk and Administrator were thanked for all their hard work.

11. FINANCE**11.1 To note the report showing payments made to date against budgets**

The budget report had been circulated prior to the meeting.

11.2 To authorise the payment of invoices/note regular payments

Current Bank A/c (HSBC)									
Payments made between 01/12/2020 and 15/12/2020									
Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
15/12/2020	Forest Row Parish Council	BACS124	216.00		36.00	4063	101	180.00	Warden oct 2020
15/12/2020	Forest Row Parish Council	BACS124	144.00		24.00	4063	101	120.00	Warden Nov 2020
15/12/2020	Knockout Print	BACS125	1,484.85			4061	101	1,484.85	Bulletin & Parish Plan
15/12/2020	Appointment Business Machines	BACS126	34.94		5.82	4017	101	29.12	Copies Oct
15/12/2020	David Newcombe Tree Services	BACS127	480.00		80.00	4230	201	150.00	Fallen tree at GRG
						4260	203	250.00	Teasley Mead hedge
15/12/2020	Biffa Waste Services Ltd	BACS128	44.14		7.36	4506	101	36.78	Office waste Nov
15/12/2020	Viking Direct	BACS129	18.56		3.09	4015	101	15.47	stationery
15/12/2020	Wealden District Council	BACS130	750.00		125.00	4211	201	187.50	Litter bins Oct-Dec
						4213	201	437.50	Litter & Dog bins Oct-Dec
15/12/2020	SME IT Solutions	BACS131	329.93		54.99	4013	101	76.14	phones/Bband Nov
						4021	101	198.80	IT support Nov
15/12/2020	Society - Local Council Clerks	BACS132	594.00		99.00	4007	101	495.00	various Training
15/12/2020	D Siddle	BACS133	12.99			4015	101	12.99	Redacting pens
15/12/2020	S Thomas	BACS134	37.80			4003	101	37.80	PMP mileage
15/12/2020	Various	BACS135	4,249.85			4003	101	299.33	Salaries Dec
						4000	101	3,950.52	Salaries Dec (Nov o/time)
15/12/2020	Inland Revenue	BACS136	1,979.38			4001	101	1,979.38	Tax & NI Oct-Dec
15/12/2020	S.A.L.C.	BACS137	36.00		6.00	4007	101	30.00	Training
15/12/2020	Secure Blackham (Bham Watch)	BACS138	2,000.00			4101	102	2,000.00	Grant (agreed June)
15/12/2020	Prepaid card	CB1PPC1220	301.69				203	301.69	CB1 to PPC Dec20 exp
15/12/2020	NEST Pensions	DDNEST1220	252.65			4001	101	252.65	Pensions Dec 2020
15/12/2020	Opus Energy	DDOPUS1220	213.88			4502	101	213.88	Gas
15/12/2020	Yu Energy	DDYU1220	152.36			4502	101	152.36	Electricity
15/12/2020	HSBC	HSBC1220	8.00			4600	101	8.00	charges Nov
15/12/2020	The Premier Trust N A Houghton	SONH1220	625.00			4012	101	625.00	Rent Dec
15/12/2020	The Premier Trust T J Newman	SOTN1220	625.00			4012	101	625.00	Rent Dec
Total Payments:			14,591.02	0.00	441.26			14,149.76	

Prepaid card									
Payments made between 01/12/2020 and 15/12/2020									
Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
15/12/2020	AmazonUK	PP30	84.62		14.10	4064	101	44.98	Cafetieres
						4016	101	25.54	headphones
15/12/2020	Milk & More	PP31	4.86			4510	101	4.86	milk Nov
15/12/2020	Zoom	PP32	14.39			4016	101	14.39	Zoom Nov
15/12/2020	Land Registry	PP33	6.00			4040	101	6.00	Plans
15/12/2020	Groupon	PP34	16.98			4410	401	16.98	Lights
15/12/2020	E.S.C.C.	PP35	174.84			4421	401	174.84	Licences SIDs
Total Payments:			301.69	0.00	14.10			287.59	

001993 RESOLVED to pay the November invoices listed above; to pay by BACS/sign the cheques accordingly.

Current Bank A/c (HSBC)									
Receipts received between 09/11/2020 and 16/12/2020									
Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Receipt Ref	Name of Payer	£ Amnt Received	£ Debtors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Detail	
	stoolball Banked: 07/12/2020	150.00							
	stoolball Groombridge Stoolball	150.00			1050	100	150.00	Donation to Gb Playarea	
Total Receipts:		150.00	0.00	0.00			150.00		

11.3 To consider ES Highways quote for urban verge grass cuts

ES Highways had confirmed that the cost for the four additional urban grass cuts would be the same as paid in the 2020/21 financial year.

001994 RESOLVED to accept this quote for urban verge cuts in 2021/22.

11.4 To receive interim internal Audit report

The meeting complimented the Responsible Finance Officer on another positive audit report.

12. POLICIES

12.1 Bullying/Harassment (external)

001995 RESOLVED to adopt the bullying/Harassment policy.

12.2 Dignity at Work

001996 RESOLVED to adopt the Dignity at Work policy.

12.3 Equal Opportunities

001997 RESOLVED to adopt the Equal Opportunities policy.

12.4 Recruitment

001998 RESOLVED to adopt the Recruitment policy.

12.5 Capability Policy

001999 RESOLVED to adopt the Capability policy.

13.1 To consider whether to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting during consideration of the following item 13.2 pursuant to Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the confidential nature of the business

002000 RESOLVED to close the meeting.

13.2 STAFF COMMITTEE – verbal update

The meeting was updated on the content of the November Staff Committee meeting.

13.3 To invite the public to return to the meeting if they were excluded for the previous item

002001 RESOLVED to re-open the meeting

14. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk confirmed that the parish office is currently closed due to staff working at home as per current Government guidelines. Telephone and email messages are being picked up.

15. MATTERS OF URGENT IMPORTANCE FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

To include Budget/Precept 2021/22 and Balls Green Community Space exercise equipment. The Clerks were asked to include resident feedback in the process for the Balls Green Community Space exercise equipment.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING To note that the date of the next Council meeting is Monday 11th January 2021 at 7.30 pm to be held virtually.

The meeting closed at 9pm.