

Minutes of the **WITHYHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING** held **VIRTUALLY/REMOTELY** on 8th March 2021 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 (and as District Councillor for Item 6), Jill Pardey, Chris Pope, Marcus Tarling, Paul Watkins.

In attendance: Debbie Siddle – The Clerk (minutes and virtual host)

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.

A member of the public representing Withyham Watch was in attendance, to speak for the grant application. He explained that Withyham Watch is not a formally constituted group but that he has the support of many residents in the aim to prevent rural theft and crime. In developing the grant application he had consulted with Blackham Watch, Sussex Police and the Clerk.

Four members of the public were present regarding item 9 Groombridge Men's Shed. They explained that, following Council's consideration of the underlease at its last meeting, the conditions of their grants require there to be no break clause of less than 5 years, and for there to be an assignment clause to allow the lease to be assigned to another community group with the agreement on WPC, should GMS to cease operating. GMS was congratulated on their work in getting the project to this stage.

The meeting started at 7.40pm

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 – Cllr Gwen Butcher – technical issues

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - None

4. MINUTES

4.1. To resolve that the minutes of the Council Meetings held on Monday 8th February 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

002028 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on Monday 8th February 2021 were approved.

4.2. Matters outstanding from minutes (not listed as separate agenda items)

Completed Actions

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2105	Clerk	Small walnut tree to be planted at Newton Willows later in year when right type of walnut can be sourced and planted at right time of year
Pg. 2194	Clerk	Balls Green Community Space reopened
Pg. 2228	Assistant Clerk	TPO guidance sent to Cllrs Anderson and Watkins
Pg. 2228	Assistant Clerk and Highways Coordinator	Dangerous road conditions at Summersales Hill stressed to ES Highways as a matter of urgency
Pg. 2229	Clerk	Permission given to GMS to go ahead with removing or trimming trees identified in the arboricultural survey, before the underlease is signed off
Pg. 2230	Community Warden	In process of trying to contact Old House developer to request spaces are kept available to residents
Pg. 2230	Councillors	Zoom meeting held to consider comments to the Parish Plan
Pg. 2230	Clerk	Cllr Pope unable to join the Finance and Administration Committee
Pg. 2230	Cllr Obbard	Cllr Obbard feels being a member of WPC's Planning Committee would be in conflict with his District Councillor role
Pg. 2231	Clerk	Adopted Business Continuity policy
Pg. 2231	Clerk	Adopted Carbon Policy
Pg. 2231	Clerk	Payroll notified that WPC will retain councillor allowances as per the 2020/21 financial year
Pg. 2232	Cllrs Gordon-James & Kelly	Zoom meeting set up regarding councillor recruitment

Actions outstanding from previous minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2067	Clerk	Enquire whether the Crime Audit Officer can assess Withyham and Blackham
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. 2170	Councillors	Notify Cllr Obbard of sites where more trees might be planted in the parish
Pg. 2192	Assistant Clerk	Arrange thank you gifts for COVID-19 volunteers
Pg. 2194	Councillor	Contact Clerk if willing to organise a volunteer group to plant trees
Pg. 2216	Clerk and PMP	Monitor whether there is an issue with littering at Newton Willows.
Pg. 2216	Clerk	Put up a sign asking whether anyone knows where the Newton Willows bin is
Pg. 2216	Council	Review whether to replace Newton Willows waste bin at its May meeting
Pg. 2219	Clerk	Confirm Earmarked Reserves at March or April Council
Pg. 2220	Cllr Pardey	Speak with a previous Marden's Hill councillor about the councillor vacancy
Pg. 2228	Clerk	Work with Blackham group to consult on whether residents would support some play equipment
Pg. 2230	Cllr Obbard/ Clerks	Undertake further consultation on Balls Green exercise equipment after Covid-19 related restrictions are lifted

Actions from these Minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2243	Cllr Tarling	Consider attending North Weald Planning Cluster on 16 th March
Pg. 2243	Cllr Anderson	Continue to investigate speed cables near Lealands Close
Pg. 2244	Clerk	Give permission for St Thomas' School to use Groombridge Recreation Ground on 3 rd or 17 th July
Pg. 2244	Cllr Tarling	Report back as to whether flooding has improved after drainage clearance near Forest Fold
Pg. 2244	Clerk	Source a sign for Gillridge Lane to ask people to take their rubbish with them
Pg. 2244	WPC's Volunteer Coordinator	Review litter picks as Covid restrictions ease, as part of the volunteer programme
Pg. 2244	Council	Support Withyham Watch's application for crime prevention signage up to £1,000 from the 2021/22 grant budget
Pg. 2245	Clerk and Cllr Gordon-James	Seek further input from GMS and solicitor's advice on the WPC/GMS lease
Pg. 2245	Council	Consider a Management Contract for the residential let at the post office from Martin & Co
Pg. 2245	Council	Consider whether Martin & Co would have an amount allowable to spend in the event of urgent or emergency works for the residential let at the post office

Pg. 2246	Cllr Winter/ Clerk	Updated Parish Plan draft and consultation proposals to be brought back to Council when ready
Pg. 2246	Clerk	Adopt the Planning policy for WPC led applications or those on WPC land
Pg. 2246	Clerk	Adopt the Planning policy for applications outside of the Parish boundary
Pg. 2248	Clerk/Councillors	April Council meeting to be held on 19 th April
Pg. 2248	Clerk/Councillors	May Council (ASM) meeting to be held on 4 th May
Pg. 2248	Clerk	Confirm responsibility for the fence between Groombridge Recreation Ground and the Cricket ground

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 – 8th February 2021

5.2 Planning Committee – 22nd February 2021

002029 RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Planning Committee of 8th and 22nd February 2021

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. TO NOTE REPORTS FROM DISTRICT and COUNTY COUNCILLORS

- District Cllr Obbard had provided the following report which was circulated in advance and noted:
- Town and Parish Councils continue to get a fortnightly Covid Pandemic update from WDC Customer Services,
- There is a new survey “Has COVID changed Us?” on the WDC website for people to record the changes that COVID has had to their lifestyles, and the impact on climate change issues. It is now open and runs to 29th March, www.wealden.gov.uk/lifestyleimpact
- At the meeting of the Full Council of the WDC on 24th February the Council Tax rates for the coming year and the Budget were accepted. It was agreed not to raise the WDC share of the Council tax
- The next meeting of the North Weald Planning Cluster will be on Tuesday 16th March. Cllr Tarling to consider attending.

7. TO NOTE WARD REPORTS**(a) Groombridge Ward (Groombridge)**

Cllr Anderson had investigated the speed cables near Lealands Close and was trying to speak with ES Highways Monitoring Department to ascertain whether they have information. Council agreed that if they were not privately instigated then the Clerk should have been notified out of courtesy, and any data made available to WPC.

The first phase of Burrswood's Lawful Development Certificate for assisted living apartments has been approved by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

St Thomas' School had requested use of Groombridge Recreation Ground on either 3rd, 10th or 17th July to hold their belated May Fair, which will be postponed due to Covid restrictions. It was noted that Withyham Village fete is 10th July and so the Clerk was asked to give permission for St Thomas' School for 3rd or 17th July to avoid a clash of events.

(b) Groombridge Ward (Withyham/Blackham)

Blackham residents plan to coordinate regular litter picks and had requested litter pickers which the Clerk would provide.

(c) Marden's Hill Ward

Lye Green potholes had been repaired but appear to be deteriorating.

Drainage clearance had been undertaken near Forest Fold, and Cllr Tarling would report back as to whether flooding has improved.

Litter has been an issue on Gillridge Lane, and the Clerk was asked to source a sign to ask people to take their rubbish with them. Councillors agreed litter is a problem across the Parish; WPC's Administrator and Volunteer Coordinator would review litter picks as Covid restrictions ease.

It was noted that the Crowborough branch of Barclays is closing.

8. GRANTS

Withyham Watch had applied for £1,000 for signage to deter rural theft and crime. The applicant had costed large signs to go by the road on private land at each end of Beech Green Lane/Station Road as well as A3 posters for smallholdings and businesses, and window stickers for homes. He had ascertained local support for this by consulting with residents and he was finalising the number of posters and window stickers that would be required. The designs were based on the Blackham Watch signs, and Blackham Watch had provided advice to the initiative. The signage would be produced at cost price by a local Withyham business.

The Clerk clarified that as Withyham Watch is not a formally constituted group, WPC's auditor had been consulted and confirmed that WPC could pay the invoices on their receipt on Withyham Watch's behalf.

Council AGREED that WPC should support the application and considered whether it should be funded through the remaining 2020/21 Grant budget or the 2021/22 Grant budget. As WPC operated on a Payments and Receipts basis and the invoice would likely be available to pay after 1 April 2021, it was agreed to utilise the 2021/22 Grant budget.

002030 RESOLVED unanimously to support Withyham Watch's application for crime prevention signage up to £1,000 from the 2021/22 Grant budget of £10,000.

The applicant left the meeting

9. GROOMBRIDGE MEN'S SHED UNDERLEASE – to consider removal of Break Clause and inclusion of wording relating to Assignments
Further consideration was given to the draft underlease between GMS and WPC for land at Groombridge Recreation Ground in order to build a Men's Shed. This was to meet the conditions of GMS' grants requiring there to be no break clause of less than 5 years.

The Clerk has spoken with WPC's solicitor to ascertain the impact for WPC of removing the break clause. She had clarified that WPC has a Forfeiture clause, which would allow WPC to terminate the lease should terms be broken.

002031 RESOLVED that the WPC/GMS underlease will not have a Break Clause for either party.

GMS had also requested an assignment clause to meet the conditions of GMS' grants to allow the lease to be assigned to another community group with the agreement on WPC, should GMS cease operating. As the lease is for the land on which GMS will build its building, it was queried whether the ownership of the building would also be relinquished with the lease, and on what financial basis. Council AGREED that further legal advice and discussion with GMS are required on this matter before it can be agreed, and the Clerk would work with Cllr Gordon-James to establish this and report back.

3 members of the GMS left the meeting

10. GROOMBRIDGE POST OFFICE – general update and agreements regarding tenancy

A report had been circulated prior to the meeting listing the actions achieved since the last report which was noted. The notes of the last meeting of the Building Group were also noted.

Cllr Pope left the meeting

Once WPC has purchased the post office building, Martin & Co had offered to manage the residential let on a £0 fee basis. Council had received a template Management Contract and Tenancy Agreement. Council AGREED in principle that WPC would sign a Management Contract with Martin & Co to manage the residential let. Martin & Co would then be responsible for identifying a tenant and finalising the tenancy agreement. Further discussion was requested on whether an amount should be agreed for the agent to spend in the event of urgent or emergency works.

The remaining member of the public left the meeting

11. PARISH PLAN TO 2024

Cllr Winter reported that a meeting had taken place to consider feedback from the Parish Plan consultation and further councillor input. Another meeting is to take place to review the draft and consider what additional consultation might be undertaken. This will be brought back to Council when ready. Cllr Winter was thanked for leading on this.

12. ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY (APA)

The Annual Parish Assembly is held between 1 March and 1 June. Due to the current Covid restrictions, a face-to-face event would not be able to happen in that timescale and SSALC has suggested that Councils may wish to consider not convening an APA this year. Council AGREED that it would not arrange an APA in 2021 but might hold a public meeting at another time if felt to be appropriate.

13. POLICIES

13.1 Planning policy for WPC led applications or those on WPC land

002032 RESOLVED to adopt the Planning policy for WPC led applications or those on WPC land.

13.2 Planning policy for applications outside of the Parish boundary

002033 RESOLVED to adopt the Planning policy for applications outside of the Parish boundary

14. FINANCE

14.1 To note the report showing payments made to date against budgets

This had been circulated prior to the meeting and was noted.

14.2 To authorise the payment of invoices/note regular payments

Time: 09:07

Cashbook 1

User: DS

Current Bank A/c (HSBC)

Payments made between 01/03/2021 and 09/03/2021

Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
01/03/2021	S Catlin	BACS166	7.82		1.30	4015	101	6.52	Office cleaning products
01/03/2021	Appointment Business Machines	BACS167	24.00		4.00	4017	101	20.00	Copies to 1/2/21
01/03/2021	N Davies/Weld Done	BACS168	240.00			4268	203	240.00	Fence repair Balls Green
01/03/2021	Sayers Maintenance Services	BACS169	709.24		118.21	4503	101	591.03	EICR & Remedial Parish Office
01/03/2021	M Anderson t/a Fixlink	BACS170	48.00		8.00	4503	101	40.00	Rad leak Parish office
01/03/2021	Demonskinz	BACS171	18.00		3.00	4015	101	15.00	Banner at Post Office
01/03/2021	Wealden District Council	BACS172	750.00		125.00	4211	201	187.50	Litter bins jan-Mar
						4213	201	437.50	Dog bins jan-Mar
01/03/2021	Wealden District Council	BACS172	-75.00		-12.50	4211	201	-62.50	CREDIT for missing bin
01/03/2021	R Bailey	BACS174	30.00			4503	101	30.00	Paid 2.3.21 - Window cleaning
01/03/2021	Michael Bell	BACS175	300.00		50.00	4018	101	250.00	Web hosting from Mar21-22
01/03/2021	SME IT Solutions	BACS176	377.22		62.87	4013	101	70.05	phone/Bband
						4021	101	244.30	It support
01/03/2021	Viking Direct	BACS177	44.84		7.47	4015	101	37.37	Stationery
01/03/2021	Costain Ltd - ESCC	BACS178	328.00		54.67	4428	401	273.33	Grit bin Beech Green Lane
01/03/2021	Forest Row Parish Council	BACS179	288.00		48.00	4063	101	240.00	Warden feb
01/03/2021	Fixed Electrical Services	BACS180	235.00			4040	101	235.00	EICR Post Office
01/03/2021	Trenchline	BACS181	1,540.36		256.73	4421	401	148.00	SID poles installation
						4421	401	1,135.63	SID poles installation
						329		-1,135.63	SID poles installation
						6000	401	1,135.63	SID poles installation
01/03/2021	R Thomas	BACS182	27.90			4003	101	27.90	Mileage Feb
01/03/2021	S Chapman	BACS183	27.92			4017	101	27.92	Printer Ink Jul20-Feb21
01/03/2021	VARIOUS	BACS184	3,254.81			4003	101	299.33	Salary PMP
						4000	101	2,955.48	Salaries Mar21
01/03/2021	Various	BACS185	614.09			4011	101	614.09	Members Allowances to Mar
01/03/2021	HMRC	BACS186	1,207.90			4001	101	1,207.90	Tax and NI Jan-Mar
01/03/2021	Biffa Waste Services Ltd	BASC173	59.42		9.90	4506	101	49.52	Office bins Feb
01/03/2021	J Pardey	CHQ100338	83.27			4011	101	83.27	Members Allowance
01/03/2021	NEST	DDNEST0321	252.65			4001	101	252.65	Pensions Mar21
01/03/2021	Opus Energy	DDOPUS0321	357.72			4502	101	357.72	Gas
01/03/2021	YU Energy	DDYU0321	159.73			4502	101	159.73	Electricity
01/03/2021	HSBC	HSBC0321	13.00			4600	101	13.00	Bank charges Jan
01/03/2021	The Premier Trust N A Houghton	SONH0321	625.00			4012	101	625.00	Parish Office rent Mar21
01/03/2021	The Premier Trust T J Newman	SOTN0321	625.00			4012	101	625.00	Parish Office Rent Mar 21
09/03/2021	Prepaid card	CB1PPC0321	75.91			203		75.91	CB1 to PPCard 0321
Total Payments:			12,249.80	0.00	736.65			11,513.15	

Prepaid card

Payments made between 01/03/2021 and 09/03/2021

Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
01/03/2021	Zoom	PP41	14.39			4016	101	14.39	Monthly zoom use charge
01/03/2021	Milk & More	PP42	3.24			4510	101	3.24	Milk
01/03/2021	ES Highways	PP43	58.28			4428	401	58.28	Licence Grit Bin BG Lane
Total Payments:			75.91	0.00	0.00			75.91	

002034 **RESOLVED** to pay the March invoices listed above; to pay by BACS/sign the cheques accordingly.

14.3 To consider quotes – None

15. CLERK'S REPORT

Council AGREED to move the April Council meeting to 19th April 2021 in order that the Clerk could be present to support the meeting. Planning Committee would likely remain on 12th April due to response deadlines.

Council AGREED that the May Council (ASM) should be held on Tuesday 4th May in order to be held under legislation allowing virtual meetings at a time when social distancing is still required, if that legislation had not been extended.

Councillors were notified that meeting papers would become available in the Members section of the WPC website, and support given to them in accessing these.

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

The Clerk was asked to confirm responsibility for the fence between Groombridge Recreation Ground and the Cricket ground.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - to note that the date of the next Council meeting is Monday 19th April 2021 at 7.30pm preceded by a Planning committee meeting at 7pm

The meeting closed at 9.30pm