

Minutes of the **WITHYHAM PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL STATUTORY MEETING** held **VIRTUALLY/REMOTELY** on 4th May 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 from item 2), Keith Obbard, Jill Pardey, Chris Pope, Marcus Tarling, Paul Watkins, Linsey Winter

In attendance: Deborah Siddle, Clerk (minutes)

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 present.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

002069 RESOLVED unanimously to elect Cllr Diana Kelly as Chairman of the Parish Council.

Cllr Kelly thanked Councillors for their endorsement and in accepting office she acknowledged the impact of Coronavirus on residents and the work of the Council. However, she thanked the Clerk, Assistant Clerk and Administrator for their work in ensuring that Council and some Committee meetings were able to continue, as well as some initiatives. She also thanked Robin Ashby for his many years support as a Councillor. WPC would miss his sound advice following his retirement.

Looking forwards Cllr Kelly highlighted that the Amblers will resume shortly, and associations are already booking up to run a Community Café when social distancing is relaxed. Saving Groombridge Post Office has driven much of WPC's work this last year and we continue to work towards acquiring the building and business within the next few months.

Looking ahead to 2021/2022, the new Parish Plan will signpost initiatives that respond to a range of needs in the Community and highlights four core themes around which WPC's work is centred:

1. Supporting climate protection initiatives
2. Building resilience in terms of promoting community self-help
3. Continuing to listen to and respond to community needs
4. Effectively promoting the work of WPC throughout the parish.

These will drive our priority actions in the short term

- Recruiting and retaining a full complement of councillors
- Developing an active group of volunteers based on a community volunteer model
- Saving Groombridge Post Office
- Working with the community to install a new play-area at Groombridge Recreation Ground

Cllr Kelly drew the meeting's attention to the Code of Conduct adopted by Withyham Parish Council and assured Councillors that she will abide by it in undertaking the duties of Chairman in accordance with the guidance given by the National Association of Local Councils on a non-political basis.

2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

002070 RESOLVED unanimously to elect Cllr Paul Watkins as Vice Chairman of the Parish Council

3. ENQUIRE WHETHER ANYONE PRESENT INTENDS TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH AND/OR RECORD THE MEETING: As this was a virtual meeting it was recorded for the purposes of the minutes.

4. APOLOGIES – Cllr Gwen Butcher (technological issues)

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Cllr Pardey item 24c (as a close neighbour to Hoadleys Lane stables).

6. MINUTES

6.1. To resolve that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday 19th April 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

002071 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th April 2020 were approved.

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

Matters resolved from previous minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2243	Cllr Anderson	No further information ascertained regarding speed cables near Lealands Close
Pg. 2245	Council	Next F&A Committee to consider and recommend 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. 2276	Clerk	Consent given for small party at Groombridge Recreation Ground
Pg. 2277	Clerk	Interim works to re-open Groombridge playarea in progress
002057	Clerk	WPC solicitor instructed to begin conveyancing work on Groombridge Post Office building
002058	Clerk	GDPR Policy for Councillors adopted
002059	Clerk	Borrowing and Investment policy adopted
002060	Clerk	Health & Safety policy adopted
002061	Clerk	Pay policy adopted
002062	Clerk	Grass/hedge/trees policy adopted
002063	Clerk	Fees and charges policy adopted
002065	Clerk	Earmarked Reserves for 2021/22 set up

Actions outstanding from previous minutes

- Residents have offered to lead on a consultation on further Balls Green equipment. Cllr Obbard has offered to work with them

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. 2167	Clerk	Provide a defibrillator and its installation at Blackham Village Hall if BVH committee supports this
Pg. 2192	Assistant Clerk	Arrange thank you gifts for COVID-19 volunteers
Pg. 2228	Clerk	Work with Blackham group to consult on whether residents would support some play equipment
Pg. 2244	Cllr Tarling	Report back as to whether flooding has improved after drainage clearance near Forest Fold
Pg. 2245	Council	Consider a Management Contract for the residential let at the post office from Martin & Co
Pg. 2246	Cllr Winter/ Clerk	Updated Parish Plan draft and consultation proposals to be brought back to Council when ready
Pg. 2275	Cllr Obbard	Speak with Volunteer Coordinator about planting trees
Pg. 2276	Cllr Obbard	Check whether Groombridge car park is one to be considered for a charging point
002054	Clerk	Install a litter bin at Groombridge car park
002055	Clerk	Replace litter bin at Newton Willows
002056	Clerk	Sign off the GMS lease once RNT has approved it

Actions from these Minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2289	Cllr Obbard	Work with residents who have offered to lead on a consultation on further Balls Green equipment
002072	Clerk	Adopt the Standing Orders
002073	Clerk	Adopt the Financial Regulations
002074	Clerk	Adopt the Scheme of Delegation
002075 - 002080	Clerk	Adopt the Terms of Reference for the Planning, Finance and Administration, Staff, Rights of Way Advisory, Road Safety and Air Traffic Committees as described
Pg. 2292	Clerk	Advertise for members of the public to the Air Traffic committee
Pg. 2292	Clerk	Written report to be requested of Blackham Village Hall management committee

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Pg. 2292	Community Warden	Written update report requested to the next meeting
Pg. 2292	Clerk	Add gas lamp to the Asset Register
Pg. 2292	PMP	Review condition of assets
002081	Clerk	Adopt the Complaints Procedure
002082	Clerk	Adopt the procedure for requests made under the Freedom of Information Act and Publications policy
002083	Clerk	Adopt the Data Protection Policy
002084	Clerk	Adopt the Press/Media Policy
Pg. 2293	Clerk	Circulate Press/Media Policy to Planning Committee
002085	Clerk	Adopt the Disciplinary Policy
002086	Clerk	Adopt the Grievance Policy
Pg. 2293	Clerk	Updated meetings calendar to be recirculated
Pg. 2293	Clerk	Seek advice from Landscape Services about eroded areas of Groombridge Recreation Ground
Pg. 2293	Clerk	Seeking advice as to whether the play area could be reopened
Pg. 2293	Highways Coordinator	Report the road surface on Motts Mill Hill
Pg. 2294	Community Warden	Contact Cllr Pardey about Hoadleys Lane stables
Pg. 2294	Clerk	Send letters to St John's bridleway letter writers advising them of the process for them to make a DMMO should they so wish
Pg. 2294	Clerk	Book Groombridge Village Hall for June meeting and make arrangements for other May and June meetings
002089	Clerk	Appoint Mulberry & Co as internal auditor for 2021/22
002090	Clerk	Review the bank mandate and make amendments as necessary
Pg. 2296	Clerk	Arrange additional Council meeting to consider PWLB wording
Pg. 2297	Cllr Fane	Investigate whether any of the Burrswood buildings, gardens or trees require listing

7. COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

7.1 Rights of Way Committee – 7th April 2021 - Noted

7.2 Planning Committee – 19th April 2021 - Noted

8. REVIEW AND ADOPT THE STANDING ORDERS

The Standing Orders had been circulated prior to the meeting

002072 RESOLVED to adopt the standing Orders.

9. REVIEW AND ADOPT THE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Financial Regulations had been circulated prior to the meeting

002073 RESOLVED to adopt the Financial Regulations.

10. REVIEW AND ADOPT THE SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The Scheme of Delegation had been circulated prior to the meeting. In order to comply with the Rights of Way Terms of Reference the Clerk recommended the following amendments:

2.8.2 Advise on additions or variations to the rights of way network in the parish

2.8.3 recommend to Council expenditure from the Rights of Way Committee budget up to a total of £500 per year

002074 RESOLVED to adopt the Scheme of Delegation with the above amendments.

11. TO REVIEW TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR STANDING COMMITTEES

The Terms of reference for all Committees had been circulated prior to the meeting.

(a) Finance and Administration

The Clerk had recommended some revisions to clarify the Committee's role in non-staff related Health and Safety and contractual matters.

002075 RESOLVED to adopt the Terms of Reference for the Finance and Administration Committee with the recommended revisions.

(b) Planning

002076 RESOLVED to adopt the Terms of Reference for the Planning Committee

(c) Staff Committee

The Clerk had recommended some revisions to clarify the Committee's responsibilities as a public meeting, as well as their ability to seek specific input.

002077 RESOLVED to adopt the Terms of Reference for the Staff Committee

(d) Rights of Way Advisory Committee

002078 RESOLVED to adopt the Terms of Reference for the Rights of Way Committee

(e) Road Safety

002079 RESOLVED to adopt the Terms of Reference for the Road Safety Committee

(f) Air Traffic Committee

002080 RESOLVED to adopt the Terms of Reference for the Air Traffic Committee

12. APPOINTMENT OF WARD CHAIRS & STANDING COMMITTEES:

(a) Ward Chairs

The parish council now has two wards (Groombridge and Marden's Hill) rather than three (Groombridge, St John's and Withyham/Blackham). In order to ensure representation across the parish there remain 3 'ward' chairs. These were appointed as follows:

- Cllr Anderson – Groombridge (Groombridge Ward) assisted by Cllr Winter
- Cllr Obbard – Withyham/Blackham (Groombridge Ward)
- Cllr Pardey – St John's (Marden's Hill Ward)

(b) Finance and Administration

AGREED Cllrs Anderson, Kelly, Tarling, Watkins and Winter.

(c) Planning

AGREED Cllrs Fane, Gordon-James, Kelly, Pardey, Pope and Tarling.

(d) Staff Committee

AGREED Cllrs Anderson, Fane, Gordon-James, Kelly and Winter.

(e) Rights of Way Advisory Committee

AGREED Cllrs Gordon-James, Tarling and Watkins. Members of the public as noted.

(f) Road Safety

AGREED Cllrs Anderson, Fane, Kelly, Obbard. Members of the public as noted.

(g) Air Traffic Committee

AGREED Cllrs Anderson, Fane, Pardey, Tarling and Watkins.

Suggested that WPC should advertise for members of the public to this committee.

13. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR REPORTING BACK

Vacancy for Blackham Village Hall noted. Should this not be filled a written report should be requested of the management committee.

14. TO REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS WITH OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES, NOT-FOR-PROFIT BODIES AND BUSINESSES

These had been circulated prior to the meeting. Council noted these arrangements until they are reviewed either as part of the next budgeting cycle or when renewal comes up, whichever is sooner.

It was noted that the Community Warden has continued shifts with WPC during COVID. A written update report was requested to the next meeting.

15. REVIEW THE COUNCIL'S AND EMPLOYEES' MEMBERSHIPS OF/ SUBSCRIPTIONS TO OTHER BODIES

Council noted these arrangements. Councillors commented that SALC and NALC contributions are quite high. The Clerk updated the meeting about changes at SALC and it was AGREED that the level of service should be monitored over the next year. It was also noted that Councils can only access NALC if they are members of their County Associations.

16. TO REVIEW THE ASSETS REGISTER

During 2020/21 the Council had taken responsibility for a gas lamp and the Clerk was asked to add this. Councillors reviewed and AGREED the Asset Register. The Parish Maintenance Person would undertake an annual condition survey of assets.

17. CONFIRMATION OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR INSURANCE COVER

Council noted that it is soon to begin its third year of a 3 year agreement with Zurich. It also noted its responsibility to reimburse the landlords for buildings insurance for The Old Station.

18. TO REVIEW THE COUNCIL'S COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The existing Complaints Procedure had been circulated prior to the meeting.

002081 RESOLVED to adopt the Complaints Procedure.

19. TO REVIEW THE COUNCIL'S PROCEDURES FOR REQUESTS MADE UNDER FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND DATA PROTECTION ACT

The Council's procedures for requests made under Freedom of Information and the existing Data Protection Act policy had been circulated prior to the meeting.

002082 RESOLVED to adopt the procedure for requests made under the Freedom of Information Act and Publications policy.

002083 RESOLVED to adopt the Data Protection Policy.

20. TO REVIEW THE COUNCIL'S POLICY FOR DEALING WITH THE PRESS/MEDIA

The existing Policy for dealing with the press/media had been circulated prior to the meeting

002084 RESOLVED to adopt the Press/Media Policy.

The Clerk was asked to circulate this to Planning Committee with regards pre-application discussions.

21. TO REVIEW THE COUNCIL'S EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures)

The Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures had been circulated prior to the meeting

002085 RESOLVED to adopt the Disciplinary Policy.

002086 RESOLVED to adopt the Grievance Policy.

22. CONFIRM COUNCIL MEETING DATES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

Outline meeting dates for 2020/21 were received and AGREED with some amendments. An updated version would be recirculated.

23. REVIEW EXPENDITURE UNDER THE GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE

The Clerk confirmed that the General Power of Competence is adopted in election year and that WPC has the General Power of Competence as of May 2019.

24. WARD REPORTS

a) Groombridge Ward (Groombridge)

Residents have raised concerns about prospective housing developments which Planning Committee is aware of and will be able to comment on once a planning application is made.

The Recreation Ground has areas where grass has been eroded due to the wet winter. The Clerk was asked to seek advice from Landscape Services.

The barkchip has been spread by a volunteer group of residents and the Clerk would be seeking advice as to whether the play area could be reopened before all safety works are completed.

The road surface on Motts Mill Hill is potholed and loose, the Highways Coordinator was asked to report.

b) Groombridge Ward (Withyham/Blackham)

No reports.

c) Marden's Hill Ward

Planning Committee is aware of renewed activity at Hoadleys Lane stables. This has been raised with WDC Enforcement who were taking action but activity has continued. Residents are advised to keep thorough logs as this would be useful evidence for WDC, and to report to the Police if they feel threatened. The Clerk was asked to request the Community Warden makes contact with Cllr Pardey.

The meeting noted that with lockdown easing the traffic jam at Crowborough Cross is increasing again.

25. VOLUNTEERS UPDATE

a paper had been circulated prior to the meeting about prospective volunteer related projects as we ease out of COVID restrictions:

- Community Café to resume when possible
- Amblers to resume on a pre-booking basis from 22 May
- Spring Clean national initiative being advertised through WPC channels and residents encouraged to participate
- Rights of Way footpath volunteer initiative being progressed
- Play area volunteers spread new woodchip on 2nd May
- Upcoming projects also include Park Corner Pond and tree planting

The Volunteer Coordinator was thanked for this report.

26. CONSIDER RIGHTS OF WAY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION REGARDING ST JOHN'S FOOTPATHS/BRIDLEWAYS

Cllr Tarling had provided the Clerk with letters from members of the public regarding paths at St John's near the Horder Centre. The Rights of Way Committee had reviewed these letters and advice from ESCC Rights of Way Team, and AGREED that should the letter writers wish to pursue a DMMO claim they should do so themselves but that WPC should not do so on their behalf. MM would draft a letter to send to the letter writers to this effect and ESCC can supply a claims pack.

Cllr Tarling queried the Committee's recommendation and the Councillors who had been present at the meeting confirmed that due consideration had been given.

002087 RESOLVED by a majority that the advice and actions outlined in the April 2021 minutes of the Rights of Way Committee should be carried out by the Clerk.

27. AGREE FORMAT OF MEETINGS AFTER CORONAVIRUS REGULATIONS 2020 END

The Clerk updated the meeting that after 7th May it would no longer be legal to hold meetings virtually and a way of meeting whilst meeting requirements of social distancing would need to be found. The Clerk was asked to book a large room at Groombridge Village Hall for the June meeting and potentially for the May Finance and Administration meeting. It was AGREED that should physical meetings for Planning not be possible then responses should be delegated to the Clerk in conjunction with the Chair of Planning, and should a physical meeting for Finance and Administration not be possible then this

should be postponed. It was hoped that investment in more technical equipment would not be required, and investment should only be made if absolutely necessary.

28. FINANCE

28.1 To note the report showing payments made to date against budgets
Noted.

30.2 To authorise the payment of invoices and note regular payments

Current Bank A/c (HSBC)									
Payments made between 27/04/2021 and 05/05/2021									
Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
27/04/2021	Blackham Creative Ltd	BACS21	72.00		12.00	4101	102	60.00	Withyham Watch stickers
05/05/2021	Quaife Woodlands	BACS22	420.00		70.00	4230	201	350.00	Tree surveys WPC land
05/05/2021	Zurich Town & Parish	BACS23	731.74			4038	101	731.74	WPC insurance premium
05/05/2021	Society - Local Council Clerks	BACS24	180.00		30.00	4007	101	150.00	2x Clerks Conference
05/05/2021	R Thomas	BACS25	24.30			4407	401	24.30	PMP Apr mileage
05/05/2021	VARIOUS	BACS26	3,498.55			4003	101	296.73	Salaries May
						4000	101	3,201.82	Salaries May & Apr overtime
05/05/2021	Wealden District Council	BACS27	100.00			4265	203	50.00	Lease Teasley Mead
						4266	203	50.00	Lease Balls Grn
05/05/2021	NEST Pensions	DDNEST0521	264.27			4001	101	264.27	May Pension contributions
05/05/2021	HSBC	HSBC0521	7.40			4600	101	7.40	Bank charges to 23Apr21
05/05/2021	The Premier Trust N A Houghton	SONH0521	625.00			4012	101	625.00	Office rent May
05/05/2021	The Premier Trust T J Newman	SOTN0521	625.00			4012	101	625.00	May office rent
Total Payments:			6,548.26	0.00	112.00			6,436.26	
5/5/21	ST JOHN THE EVANGELISTAL	BACS28	1500.00			4101	102	1500.00	GRANT FOR GRASS CUTTING + WORKS
5/5/21	BARRY AGRUPIER	BACS29	43.20			4421		43.20	HIGHWAY CORDS MILEAGE
5/5/21	SME IT	BACS30	233.16		38.86	4021		194.30	IT SUPPORT
5/5/21	Biffa	BACS31	64.46		10.74	4056		53.72	OFFICE DINING
Prepaid card									
Payments made between 27/04/2021 and 05/05/2021									
Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
05/05/2021	HSE Docs.Com	PP10	23.98		4.00	4007	101	19.98	2x VDU H&S training
05/05/2021	Milk & More	PP8	2.43			4510	101	2.43	Milk Apr
05/05/2021	Royal Mail	PP9	3.66			4015	101	3.66	Postage (2xTenders)
Total Payments:			30.07	0.00	4.00			26.07	

002088 **RESOLVED** to pay the May invoices listed above, to pay by BACS/sign the cheques accordingly.

28.3 To Agree Direct Debits

Name of company	Purpose	Amount
NEST Pensions	Pension contributions	10% of salary (Clerk & Assistant Clerk)
Opus Energy	Gas	varies
Bristol/Yu Energy	Electricity	varies
Castle Water	Water charges	varies

Business Stream	Water charges	varies
Siemens	Copier rental agreement	£167+VAT
EE Ltd	PMP phone	£7.50 + VAT

(Parish office rent is paid by 2 Standing Orders totalling £1,250 per month)

Council AGREED to continue paying the above in this way

28.4 To agree the appointment of the Internal Independent Auditor

The Clerk recommended that Council continues to appoint Mulberry & Co as its internal auditor. This was AGREED.

002089 RESOLVED to appoint Mulberry & Co as internal auditor for 2021/22.

28.5 To agree any quotes - there were no quotes.

28.6 In the event of new members, to agree that the Clerk submits an amended bank mandate with all Finance and Administration Committee members as signatories

002090 RESOLVED that the Clerk would review the bank mandate to ensure that Cllrs Anderson, Kelly, Tarling, Watkins and Winter are signatories and make amendments as necessary.

30. CLERK'S REPORT

Queries had been raised prior to agreement of the Public Works Loan application, one of which was the need to redraft and approve the resolution to borrow. It was AGREED that the Clerk would arrange an additional Council meeting as soon as possible for this to happen.

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

Cllr Obbard updated the meeting in his capacity as District Councillor that following last summer's SHELAA where people identified possible sites for development, WDC has publicised that list on its website and is working through their assessments of those places. They will also need to reassess those in the previous draft Local Plan.

Cllr Fane had attended a virtual meeting of residents and the developers for Burrswood. They will present something on paper late summer/early autumn at a further meeting. It was queried whether any of the buildings, gardens or trees require listing, Cllr Fane would investigate.

32. DATE OF NEXT MEETING To note that the date of the next Council meeting will be an additional meeting (as per agenda item 30), date to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm