

Minutes of the **WITHYHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING** held at
GROOMBRIDGE OLD STATION on **8th November 2021** at 7.30pm

PRESENT Cllrs Andrew Fane, Alan Gaukroger Robert Gordon-James, Diana Kelly (Chair), Keith Obbard (as District Councillor for item 8), Jill Pardey, Jennie Paulson-Ellis (from item 2), Marcus Tarling, Paul Watkins, Linsey Winter.

In attendance: Deborah Siddle - Clerk (minutes)

Members of the public are encouraged to attend meetings and there is a 10-minute opportunity for members of the public to address the Council. There were no members of the public present.

Before the meeting opened Cllr Kelly spoke of the recent death of District Cllr Hardy, and expressed condolences to his family on behalf of WPC.

1. ENQUIRE WHETHER ANYONE PRESENT INTENDS TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH AND/OR RECORD THE MEETING: None.

2. COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION TO GROOMBRIDGE WARD

Jennie Paulson-Ellis had expressed an interest in becoming a councillor for Groombridge Ward. The Chair welcomed her and thanked her for her interest.

Mrs Paulson-Ellis was invited to introduce herself and explained that she had previously been a Councillor for Speldhurst Parish Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, and had been Mayor for the latter.

002151 RESOLVED unanimously that Jennie Paulson-Ellis should be co-opted to the vacancy in Groombridge ward.

3. APOLOGIES – Cllr Nick Anderson – work commitment
Cllr Chris Pope

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – None.

Whilst not a prejudicial or pecuniary interest, Cllr Tarling explained that he is a member of Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC) and he would therefore not participate in item 11.

5. MINUTES

5.1. To resolve that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday 20th September 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

002152 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2021 were approved.

5.2. Matters outstanding from these minutes (not listed as separate agenda items)**Matters resolved from previous minutes**

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2356	Clerk	FP33 site visit undertaken with representatives from ESCC, WPC and Ramblers
002139	Clerk	Southern Landscape & Construction Ltd notified of the intention to proceed with their Tender on the basis that all funding is in place before the Contract is formally signed and that it is possible to negotiate some amendments to the design
002140	Clerk	Fundraiser engaged on a commission basis to raise funds for the new Groombridge play area
Pg. 2359	Clerk	Email agreement to purchase new swing parts after Southern Landscape & Construction Ltd agreed to fit them free of charge
Pg. 2360	Cllr Winter	PCSO notified of young people causing a disturbance on Corseley Road
Pg. 2360	Clerk	PCSO notified of safety issue of flooding on Summersales Hill
002142	Clerk	Electrical and installation works undertaken on the defibrillator at Blackham Village Hall
002143	Clerk	Speldhurst Clerk notified that WPC will add Groombridge Village Hall defibrillator to the WPC asset register should SPC install one in Old Groombridge

Actions outstanding from previous minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2067	Clerk	Enquire whether the Crime Audit Officer can assess Withyham and Blackham
Pg. 2163	Clerk	Resident interested in looking after Park Corner Pond contacting Clerk to arrange meeting. Cllr Kelly to attend
Pg. 2228	Clerk	Work with Blackham group to consult on whether residents would support some play equipment
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
Pg. 2297	Cllr Fane	Investigate whether any of the Burrowswood buildings, gardens or trees require listing
Pg. 2319	Clerk	Work with TW Ramblers on the contents and siting of a new circular walk lectern
Pg. 2319	Clerk	Arrange for signs requested by Blackham litterpickers
002141	Clerk	Allow email agreement of quotes for works on the residential part of Groombridge Post Office property
Pg. 2360	Administrator	Add sites of the defibrillators to the website and/or Facebook

Actions from these Minutes

An email from ES Highways had been circulated by the Clerk prior to the meeting:

“I can advise that following a review of the issues on Summersales Hill, remedial works have been added to an upcoming drainage programme. At present, I am awaiting dates for these works, please be advised that works in this programme are being planned on a priority basis. Also due to environmental concerns in the area, these works are subject to a full environmental risk assessment prior to commencing. Therefore, at present I do not have a timeframe for when these works may be planned in. The proposed works include excavating and replacing several collapsed outlets as well as general surveying and clearance works.”

The Clerk was asked to monitor this and contact ES Highways if no further action is taken by January 2022.

It was queried what had happened with planting a walnut tree; the Clerk would pursue this.

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2382	Clerk	Monitor progress at Summersales Hill and contact ES Highways if no further action is taken by January 2022
Pg. 2382	Clerk	Query progress on walnut tree
Pg. 2383	Clerk	Enquire whether the Highways Coordinator would be interested in investigating if Back Lane could be classified as a Drivers' lane
Pg. 2384	Clerk	Notify St Thomas' School PTA that they may use Groombridge Recreation Ground on 2 May 2022 for their annual May Fair
Pg. 2384	Clerk	SLC to fit swings at Groombridge Recreation Ground
Pg. 2384	Clerk	Advise Groombridge Cricket Club that it would be more effective if they put out cones on the road when they require vehicular access.
Pg. 2384	Clerk	Arrange 'keep clear' signage to go on the gate at Groombridge Recreation Ground
Pg. 2384	Cllr Obbard	Enquire whether a resident would maintain the raised beds at Balls Green Community Space
Pg. 2385	Councillors	Keep 4 December at 11am free for celebrity opening of Groombridge Post Office
Pg. 2385	Councillors and Clerk	Post Office building site visit at 6.30pm on 20 th December, followed by the December Council meeting at 7.30pm
Pg. 2385	Assistant Clerk	Draft a letter stating WPC's objection to Gatwick's second runway
Pg. 2385	Assistant Clerk	Format and design the Parish Plan document for publication on our website and on hard copy.
Pg. 2385	Cllr Kelly	Make personal contact with key stakeholders to disseminate the Parish Plan

002155	Cllr Gaukroger	Undertake a draft on the Ashdown Forest Carparking Consultation and provide to the Clerk to seek agreement on email in order to submit before the deadline
002156	Clerk	Refurbish and site the gas lamp with a plaque for the Queen's Jubilee
Pg. 2388	Clerk	Notify ESCC of the intention to fund an additional four urban grass cuts
Pg. 2388	Councillors	Survey the effectiveness of ESCC's grass cutting and feed back to County Cllr Georgia Taylor
Pg. 2388	Clerk	Seek quotes for an alternative payroll provider

6. 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.

6.1 Planning Committee – 13th September 2021 - noted

6.2 Planning Committee – 27th September 2021 - noted

6.3 Planning Committee – 25th October 2021 - noted

7. VOLUNTEER HIGHWAY COORDINATOR – issues update and time log for noting

An update on ongoing highways issues in the parish had been circulated prior to the meeting, along with a log of time spent by the Volunteer Highways Coordinator.

Council recognised that the Highways Coordinator is a voluntary role but it is undertaken in a very professional manner with numerous hours invested. The Chair was asked to thank Mr Agutter on behalf of WPC.

Cllr Tarling asked the Clerk to enquire whether the Highways Coordinator would be interested in investigating if Back Lane could be classified as a Drivers' lane.

8. TO NOTE REPORTS FROM DISTRICT and COUNTY COUNCILLORS

District Cllr Obbard's report had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- The Annual Parish Conference has been rescheduled to next Spring, probably April or May 2022. The change of date has partly been due to the disruption from Covid, but also to give the District Council the opportunity to disseminate information about the new Local Plan.
- Grants that the Council makes to local voluntary and community organisations are to be replaced with a combination of Crowdfunding and community lottery. This has been successfully used by other local authorities and it is hoped that it will raise more money than has been available in the past.
- The Housing and Revenue Account Business Plan has been published for the period 2021 – 2025 which sets out the Councils Social Housing plans for the next 5 years at 150 homes directly provided by them for rent (WDC also has a subsidiary providing homes for sale). The cabinet also considered a report on the decarbonisation of the housing stock

Cllr Obbard also provided an information sheet about what people can do about Climate Change.

9. WARD REPORTS

(a) Groombridge Ward (Groombridge) to include request to use Groombridge Recreation Ground on 8 May 2022 for St Thomas' School May Fair and update on swings

St Thomas's School PTA asked to use Groombridge Recreation Ground on 2 May 2022 for their annual May Fair. This was AGREED by Council.

Further to the discussion at September Council, the Clerk had asked Southern Landscape & Construction Ltd (the preferred contractor for the new playground) what they would charge for fitting the new swings, and whether they would then be transferrable into the new design. SLC confirmed that if WPC purchased the parts their Director would fit them free of charge, combining it with a site visit with the playground group. They also believe that the swings could be worked into the new playground design. Agreement had been sought on email to proceed on this basis and all Councillors who responded supported the purchase.

Groombridge Cricket Club 3/11/21 had emailed regarding problems of people parking across the entrance to Groombridge Recreation Ground and asked WPC to investigate having a white line the road. The Clerk confirmed that East Sussex Highways have an application process for them to paint white lines (Access Protection Markings) costing £46 (+ £1 per meter for each additional meter over 10m).

It was observed that it is unlikely that white lines would be enforced and they were therefore not supported. The Clerk was asked to advise Groombridge Cricket Club that it would be more effective if they put out cones when they require access. WPC would provide 'keep clear' signage to go on the gate.

A site visit had taken place at FP33 between ESCC, WPC, Ramblers and Groombridge Place regarding drainage issues. Groombridge Place had confirmed they can do something about this.

(b) Groombridge Ward (Withyham/Blackham)

It was observed that the raised beds at Balls Green Community Space require attention, Cllr Obbard would enquire whether a resident would do this.

(c) Marden's Hill Ward

Councillors await with interest to find out what will happen with the Hoadleys Lane stables planning application.

A serious dog attack had occurred in the Ward.

10. GROOMBRIDGE POST OFFICE UPDATES AND NEXT STEPS

10.1 Post Office and Shop refurbishment and Opening

Following the refurbishment and transfer of ownership to Withyham Parish Community Interest Company, Cllr Kelly reported that the Post Office is fully

staffed and the shop has a full complement of volunteers. The first full week of operation had been very successful and all those involved in the project were thanked, including the staff team and the Councillors who are volunteering.

There will be a celebrity opening on 4 December at 11am by Will Bailey, Paralympian as he has close links with the village and had worked at the Post Office. Councillors were asked to keep this date free.

10.2 Residential update and site visit invitation to Councillors

The current tenants will be leaving mid-December and Cllr Gordon-James has been gathering quotes for works required.

Councillors were asked if they would like a site visit while the property is uninhabited and before works commence. It was AGREED this would take place at 6.30pm on 20th December, followed by the December Council meeting at 7.30pm.

11. GATWICK SECOND RUNWAY – agree consultation response

A draft response by members of the Air Traffic Committee had been circulated to Council prior to the meeting which recommended that Council objects to the proposed expansion of Gatwick Airport and supports Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC) in their campaign 'Gatwick is Big Enough'.

002153 RESOLVED to object to the proposed expansion of Gatwick Airport and support GACC in their campaign 'Gatwick is Big Enough'.

The Assistant Clerk was asked to draft a letter to this effect to send to Gatwick Airport.

12. PARISH PLAN – agree final draft

The draft Parish Plan to 2024 had been circulated prior to the meeting and had previously been consulted on and discussed at Council.

002154 RESOLVED to adopt the new updated Parish Plan to 2024.

The Assistant Clerk was asked to format and design the document for publication on our website and on hard copy. Cllr Kelly would make personal contact with key stakeholders.

Cllr Winter was thanked for her work.

13. ASHDOWN FOREST CARPARKING CONSULTATION – to consider whether WPC should make a response

Ashdown Forest Conservators are considering charging people to use their car parks and are undertaking a consultation (deadline 6 December).

Councillors raised concern that charging at the car parks may result in people parking on the roads and verges, and that it could alter the usage of the Forest. It was felt to be ironic that whilst the Ashdown Forest is the jewel in the crown of Wealden it would be the only place where car parks have charges. It was queried whether WPC should continue to support Grant applications from the Conservators if charging was put in place.

002155 RESOLVED that WPC should make a response. Cllr Gaukroger would undertake a draft and provide to the Clerk to seek agreement on email in order to submit before the deadline.

14. QUEENS JUBILEE – consider letter and information regarding Beacons

The Clerk had circulated information regarding the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacons prior to the meeting. Councillors considered this initiative but felt that there would be logistical issues and purchase of the Beacons is costly. As WPC already has a historic gas lamp it was AGREED that instead this should be refurbished and sited with a plaque.

002156 RESOLVED that the gas lamp should be refurbished and sited with a plaque for the Queen's Jubilee.

15. FINANCE

15.1 Note payments made since September Council meeting

Time: 10:16

Cashbook 1

User: DS

Current Bank A/c (HSBC)

Payments made between 22/09/2021 and 11/10/2021

Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
29/09/2021	Uni-Shop Fitting Ltd	BACS119	642.72			5200	500	642.72	Uni-Shop Fitting Ltd
29/09/2021	Uni-shop Fitting Ltd	BACS119	-642.72			5200	500	-642.72	PO fit out VAT correction
29/09/2021	Uni-Shop Fitting Ltd	BACS119	642.72		107.12	5200	500	535.60	PO fit out items
29/09/2021	EE ltd	DDEE0921	9.00		1.50	4013	101	7.50	PMP phone contract
29/09/2021	Siemens Financial Services	DDSIEM0921	200.40		33.40	4017	101	167.00	Copier agreement
07/10/2021	D Siddle	BACS120	512.89		85.48	5200	500	427.41	Items for Post Office refurb
07/10/2021	Heathfield & Waldron PC	BACS121	45.00			4415	401	45.00	1st aid training (RoW member)
07/10/2021	Appointment Business Machines	BACS122	23.22		3.87	4017	101	19.35	Copy charges
07/10/2021	SME IT Solutions	BACS123	319.52		53.25	4021	101	194.30	IT contract
						4013	101	71.97	phone/Bband
07/10/2021	Knockout Print	BACS124	697.00			4019	101	697.00	newsletter print & some post
07/10/2021	Wealden District Council	BACS125	858.00		143.00	4213	201	455.00	Dog bins Jul-Sep
						4211	201	260.00	waste bins Jul-Sep
07/10/2021	Biffa Waste Services Ltd	BACS126	80.97		13.50	4506	101	67.47	Parish office bins
07/10/2021	Various	BACS127	3,835.70			4000	101	3,835.70	Salaries Oct & O/time Sep
07/10/2021	Prepaid card	CB1PPC1021	410.30			203		410.30	CB1 to Prepaid card 1021
07/10/2021	NEST Pensions	DDNEST1021	264.27			4001	101	264.27	Pension contribs Oct
07/10/2021	HSBC	HSBC1021	6.50			4600	101	6.50	Fees to 230921
07/10/2021	The Premier Trust N A Houghton	SONH1021	625.00			4012	101	625.00	Rent Oct
07/10/2021	The Premier Trust T J Newman	SOTN1021	625.00			4012	101	625.00	Parish Office rent Oct
Total Payments:			9,155.49	0.00	441.12			8,714.37	

Prepaid card

Payments made between 01/10/2021 and 11/10/2021

Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
07/10/2021	Zoom Ltd	PP30	14.39		2.40	4016	101	11.99	Zoom
07/10/2021	Milk & More	PP31	1.62			4510	101	1.62	Milk
07/10/2021	AmazonUK	PP32	28.25			5200	500	28.25	Items for Post Office hooks et
07/10/2021	Shopshields	PP33	125.34			5200	500	125.34	covid green post office
07/10/2021	CompareManVan	PP34	240.70			5200	500	240.70	Removals 13 & 26/10 post offic
Total Payments:			410.30	0.00	2.40			407.90	

15.2 Note the report showing payments made to date against budgets

Noted.

15.3 Authorise the payment of November invoices/note regular payments

Time:13:26

Cashbook 1

User: DS

Current Bank A/c (HSBC)

Payments made between 18/10/2021 and 08/11/2021

			Nominal Ledger Analysis					
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount Transaction Details
18/10/2021	Ray Bailey	BACS128	30.00			4503	101	30.00 Windowcleaning office (paid)
18/10/2021	R Adams	BACS129	50.98		8.50	4415	401	42.48 Materials RoW trailer (paid)
18/10/2021	D Siddle	BACS130	83.50			4010	101	83.50 Rosie leaving (paid)
18/10/2021	S Chapman	BACS131	51.00			4010	101	51.00 Remembrance wreaths (paid)
18/10/2021	N Brett	BACS132	21.49			5200	500	21.49 Keys p/office (paid)
18/10/2021	Wealden Ass.of Local Councils	BACS133	31.00			4008	101	31.00 Subs 21/22
24/10/2021	Pioneer Security Services Co L	BACS148	3,648.00		608.00	5200	500	3,040.00 Flooring & counter works
05/11/2021	EJP Fire Protection Ltd	BACS151	120.00		20.00	5200	500	100.00 Fire extinguishers (PO)
05/11/2021	Forest Row Parish Council	BACS152	216.00		36.00	4063	101	180.00 Community Warden Oct21
05/11/2021	VARIOUS Salaries	BACS153	4,890.66			4000	101	2,900.00 Nov Salaries
05/11/2021	HSBC	HSBC1121	7.40			4005	101	1,990.66 Oct o/time
05/11/2021	NEST Pensions	NEST1121	264.27			4600	101	7.40 Bank charges 24/9-23/10
05/11/2021	The Premier Trust N A Houghton	SONH1121	625.00			4001	101	264.27 Pension contributions
05/11/2021	The Premier Trust T J Newman	SOTN1121	625.00			4012	101	625.00 Rent Nov
08/11/2021	Viking Direct	BACS134	290.01		48.34	4012	101	625.00 Rent Nov
08/11/2021	DemonSkinz	BACS135	36.00			4015	101	241.67 stationery,batteries,
08/11/2021	Appointment Business Machines	BACS136	46.71		6.00	4019	101	30.00 Basnner Post office
08/11/2021	Weld Done	BACS137	90.00		7.78	4017	101	38.93 Copier costs
08/11/2021	SME IT Solutions	BACS138	328.37			4406	401	90.00 Fixing post Defib BVH
08/11/2021	Commercial Services Trading Lt	BACS139	2,250.97		54.73	4013	101	74.84 Phone/Bband
08/11/2021	Groombridge Village Hall	BACS140	36.30			4021	101	198.80 IT contract
08/11/2021	CSS Ltd	BACS141	1,478.40		375.16	4205	201	1,875.81 Grass cutting
08/11/2021	Viking Direct	BACS142	212.22			4012	101	36.30 Hire for meetings
08/11/2021	B Agutter	BACS143	91.23		246.40	5200	500	1,232.00 CCTV at Post office
08/11/2021	SJ Osborne & Son	BACS144	157.96		35.37	4015	101	176.85 Stationery
08/11/2021	Biffa Waste Services Ltd	BACS145	127.43			4421	401	91.23 HC mileage Jul-Oct
08/11/2021	Sayers Maintenance Services	BACS146	236.70		26.33	5200	500	131.63 Locks at Post Office
08/11/2021	N Wealden Community Transport	BACS147	135.00		21.24	4506	101	106.19 Parish Office bins
08/11/2021	Pioneer Security Services Co L	BACS148	5,097.00		39.45	4406	401	197.25 Defibrillator install BVH
08/11/2021	Ultimate Sparkle	BACS149	50.00			4401	401	135.00 Wealdlink Oct-Dec21
08/11/2021	M Jones Electrical Services	BACS150	5,994.00		849.50	5200	500	4,247.50 Balance of quote PO Refurb
08/11/2021	Prepaid card	CB1PPC1121	295.00			5200	500	50.00 Windows Post office
08/11/2021	Roy Harvey	CHQ100339	655.00		999.00	203		4,995.00 Electrical Works (post office)
08/11/2021						4426	401	295.00 CB1 to PPCard Nov21
Total Payments:			28,272.60	0.00	3,381.80			655.00 Village Sign Repaint
								24,890.80

Prepaid card									
Payments made between 18/10/2021 and 09/11/2021									
Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
08/11/2021	Milk & More	PP35	4.05			4510	101	4.05	Milk deliveries
08/11/2021	AmazonUK	PP36	46.50		7.75	5200	500	38.75	Various (Post office)
08/11/2021	Ikea	PP37	72.00		12.00	5200	500	60.00	Shelves (PO)
08/11/2021	Vistaprint	PP38	44.90			4015	101	44.90	Business Cards
08/11/2021	Land registry	PP39	3.00			4415	401	3.00	RoW search
08/11/2021	UniShop Fitting Ltd	PP40	46.20		7.70	5200	500	38.50	Edging slat wall
08/11/2021	Mr Beams	PP41	39.40		6.57	5200	500	32.83	External light (PO)
08/11/2021	Argos	PP42	38.95		6.49	4015	101	32.46	Shelves (parish office)
Total Payments:			295.00	0.00	40.51			254.49	

002157 RESOLVED to pay the November invoices listed above, to pay by BACS/sign the cheques accordingly.

15.4 Note receipts, including CIL monies

A report from Wealden District Council had been circulated showing £17,975.39 in Community Infrastructure Levy payments being paid to WPC. It was suggested that CiL funds could be utilised for the gas lamp (item 14)

15.5 Consider quotes, to include ES Highways quote for urban verge grass cuts

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) had written to in relation to the urban grass cutting service for 2022 offering options for provision of cuts.

Councillors asked whether it is possible to purchase 2 additional cuts and to specify when cuts take place, the Clerk confirmed that it is not.

Councillors AGREED to Option 2 – extra cuts: Parish/Town Councils may fund an additional four cuts to be carried out by ESCC, totalling six cuts (two standard and four extra) over the course of the year at £957 for the year.

002158 RESOLVED to fund an additional four urban grass cuts to be carried out by ESCC.

Councillors would survey the effectiveness of ESCC's grass cutting and feed back to County Cllr Georgia Taylor.

14. CLERK'S REPORT to include notice of termination from payroll provider

The Clerk reported that the Council's payroll provider would be retiring in April 2022. Quotes would be sought for an alternative provider.

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

Representatives for WPC would be laying wreaths at all 4 parish churches on Remembrance Sunday.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING To note that the date of the next Council meeting will be Monday 20th December 2021 at 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm