

Minutes of the **WITHYHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING** held at **THE OLD STATION, GROOMBRIDGE** on **10th October 2022** at 7.30pm

PRESENT Cllrs Nick Anderson, Andrew Fane, Alan Gaukroger, Robert Gordon-James (on Zoom therefore unable to vote), Diana Kelly (Chair), Keith Obbard (as District Councillor for item 6), Jill Pardey, Jennie Paulson-Ellis, Paul Watkins, Linsey Winter

In attendance: Deborah Siddle - Clerk (minutes)
1 prospective councillor

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. A prospective councillor was present to observe the meeting, and was welcomed by the Chair.

1. ENQUIRE WHETHER ANYONE PRESENT INTENDS TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH AND/OR RECORD THE MEETING: The meeting was recorded for the use of the Clerk and would be erased once the minutes are agreed.

2. APOLOGIES — Cllr Marcus Tarling
County Cllr Taylor
District Cllr Millward

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Cllrs Kelly and Watkins are Directors of the CIC that runs Groombridge Post Office and Shop, so declared interests under Appendix B of the Code of Conduct which meant that they could speak on item 8 but not vote.

Cllr Obbard declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Appendix A) for item 5.3 in case the minutes of the Planning Committee were discussed.

4. MINUTES

4.1. To resolve that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday 12th September 2022 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

002366 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12th September 2022 were approved.

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

Matters resolved from previous minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2442	Cllr Paulson-Ellis	Rights of Way Committee has updated Clerk on broken stiles
Pg. 2515	Clerk	Post Office/Shop considered as part of this agenda
Pg. 2541	Clerk	St John's School contacted about strategies to alleviate road safety issues, and a potential grant

WPC/10.10.2022 – 002590

Pg. 2566	Assistant Clerk	Highways Coordinator taking forwards training for Councillors who have offered to help with the SID
Pg. 2567	Administrator	The Good Company People now using meeting room every Monday morning
Pg. 2568	Clerks	No complaints received by Clerks to send to Cllr Taylor about cuts to bus services
Pg. 2568	Clerk	Cllr Kelly notified of suggestion to explore whether Wealdlink can help with bus cuts and would raise at next meeting
Pg. 2568	Administrator	Groombridge Scouts will help with litterpicking on Groombridge recreation Ground in their summer term
Pg.2569	Clerk	Finance Committee agreed to consider trees overhanging GMS if they arise as part of works resulting from tree survey
Pg. 2569	Clerk	Publicised the Parish Charity in the church and village magazines
002348	Clerk	Signed up to the Civility and Respect Pledge online
Pg. 2569	Clerk	Community Warden asked to visit the Tanyard more often as there is evidence of drug use
Pg. 2569	Clerk	Publicised the Community Warden role in the church and village magazines
002349	Clerk	Adopted the amended Email policy
002350	Clerk	Adopted the Vexatious policy
002351	Clerk	Adopted the Planning policy on pre application discussions with 'NPPF' replaced by 'current national planning policy'
002352	Clerk	Adopted the policy on planning applications by or on parish council land
002353	Clerk	Adopted the policy on planning applications outside of the parish
002354	Clerk	Adopted the CIL policy
Pg. 2570	Clerk	Cllr Taylor emailed a copy of WPC's response to the SE Transport Consultation
002355	Clerk	Amended WPC bank mandates for HSBC and Nationwide to include the current Councillor members of Finance Committee
Pg. 2570	Clerk	Included in the church and village magazines that WPC had objected night flights
Pg. 2574	Cllr Obbard	Attended the 20s Plenty seminar and feed back given as part of this agenda

Actions outstanding from previous minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2067	Clerk	Enquire whether the Crime Audit Officer can assess Withyham and Blackham
Pg. 2228	Clerk	Work with Blackham group to consult on whether residents would support some play equipment

WPC/10.10.2022 – 002591

Pg. 2297	Cllr Fane	Investigate whether any of the Burrswood buildings, gardens or trees require listing
Pg. 2319	Clerk	Arrange for signs requested by Blackham litterpickers
Pg. 2515	Clerk	Put Electric Vehicle charge point at the parish office on an agenda after the lease is secured
Pg. 5217	Councillors	Let Cllr Obbard and the Clerks know of anyone who would like to coordinate or help with Speedwatch
002313	Playground Group/ Clerk	Remaining playground income to be used for items such as plaques, picnic benches/seats and contingency (Groombridge Playground)
002314	Playground Group/ Clerk	Add a wheelchair accessible piece of equipment, once income confirmed (Groombridge Playground)
002315	Playground Group/ Clerk	If more funds are raised reinstate the second combination wall, or a similar piece of equipment (Groombridge Playground)
Pg. 2568	Administrator/Cllr Anderson	Offer replacement trees to the Cricket Club if they would like them
002356	Clerk	Source and set up a bank account with a third institution and transfer the excess funds from the HSBC accounts to that,
Pg. 2574	Clerk	Closing the 'HSBC Deposit account' once new account is set up

Actions from these Minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2592	Cllr Obbard	Check whether he could attend the WDALC meeting
Pg. 2593	Clerk	Arrange a replacement lock on WPC's container
002367	Clerk	Grant an additional £6,000 subsidy to Withyham Parish Community Interest Company in 2022/23
Pg. 2594	Clerk	Respond to the IRP that WPC has frozen councillor allowances for the past couple of years
Pg. 2594	Clerk	Query why councillor allowances are taxable
002368	Clerk	Accept the three-year grass cutting quote for 2023-2025 from Landscape Services with the Newton Willows spec updated and once GSGA income is confirmed
002369	Clerk	Fund an additional four urban grass cuts in 2023/24 from ES Highways at a cost of £976 for the year
Pg. 2594	Clerk	Ask residents for their views on whether 20mph limits should be introduced
Pg. 2594	Clerk	Send agreed reply to response from DfT on Gatwick night flights
002370	Clerk	Engage a Project Manager through ESALC to produce an up to date Resilience/Emergency Plan
002371	Clerk	Adopt the Protocol for Capital Expenditure
002372	Clerk	Adopt the Prepaid Card Policy

WPC/10.10.2022 – 002592

002373	Clerk	Adopt the Document Retention and Destruction Policy
002374	Clerk	Adopt the Community Engagement Statement of Intent
002375	Clerk	Adopt the Petitions policy
002378	Clerk	Submit a Code of Conduct complaint to the District Monitoring Officer on behalf of WPC
Pg. 2598	Clerk	Co-options, Wild verge signage and Teasley Mead play equipment on the next agenda

5. 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.

5.1 Staff & Administration Committee – 5th September 2022 - noted

5.2 Staff & Administration Committee – 21st September 2022 - noted

5.3 Planning Committee – 26th September 2022 - noted

5.4 Finance Committee - 26th September 2022 - noted

6. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT and COUNTY COUNCILLORS

District Cllr Obbard had provided a written report which had been circulated prior to the meeting. It highlighted a partnership between WDC and Beam to support homeless people, and also outlined recent planning matters including the impending appeal for the Ardenvale development near Back Lane, Groombridge; Cllr Obbard is aware that residents are considering how they can engage with the appeal process. Councillors voiced concern about the planning system, about the number of appeals that are currently being made and their costs to WDC.

Cllr Kelly asked Cllr Obbard if he could represent WPC at the next Wealden District Association of Local Councils meeting, he agreed to check his diary and let the Clerk know if he was available.

County Cllr Taylor had also provided a report, within which she explained that at the ESCC Full Council meeting she would be putting forward a motion and asking questions about fracking.

Cllr Taylor confirmed that she had asked for a report on the level of roads funding (including road safety, repairs and re-surfacing investment) by division. She had also met with the ES Highways manager for Withyham parish to raise many of the issues that the Highways Coordinator had shared including white lines, verges, drainage and other road safety and repairs issues.

Following a conversation about the cost of living at our September meeting, Cllr Taylor had provided more information. Residents can access <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/support-with-the-cost-of-living> for various sources of support. A small grants scheme will be managed by the Sussex Community Foundation at <https://sussexgiving.org.uk/> and there is some information about their latest report on the website. However

the fund itself is in the last stages of development and will be launched by the end of October.

Cllr Kelly reported that she would be meeting with East Sussex Highways on Zoom the next day with the Highways Coordinator.

7. WARD REPORTS

(a) Groombridge Ward (Groombridge)

Cllr Anderson mentioned that Groombridge Cricket Club may apply for a grant from WPC towards a mower in the next financial year.

An attempt had been made to open WPC's container doors. The lock was holding it secure but would need to be replaced; the Clerk would arrange.

There continue to be concerns about antisocial parking on Corseley Road between Springfield Road and Station Road. The Community Warden ensures that the road is included on his patrol and puts a polite notice on any cars that are parking antisocially.

(b) Groombridge Ward (Withyham/Blackham)

Water has been running down Cherry Gardens Hill for 3 weeks. SE Water and ES Highways have been alerted by Cllr Obbard and the Highways Coordinator.

(c) Marden's Hill Ward

There has been no further information about the introduction of parking charges by the Ashdown Forest Conservators.

8. GROOMBRIDGE POST OFFICE/SHOP – Consider recommendation from Finance Committee for additional Subsidy

At its 26th September meeting the Finance Committee considered a request from Withyham Parish Community Interest Company for additional subsidy from WPC towards Groombridge Post Office and Shop due to increased costs. They agreed to recommend to Council an additional £6,000 subsidy in the current financial year as this could be funded from General Reserves without impacting on Precept. The CIC was also applying for grants and writing a business plan.

Councillors agreed that it was better to act proactively now than to let the situation perpetuate. Councillors agreed unanimously to grant an additional £6,000 in subsidy in the 2022/23 financial year. Cllrs Kelly and Watkins did not take part in the vote.

002367

RESOLVED to grant an additional £6,000 subsidy to Withyham Parish Community Interest Company for the Post office and Shop in 2022/23, to be taken from General Reserves.

9. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (IRP): COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES FOR 2023/24 – Comments and Suggestions

Prior to the next IRP meeting which considers Wealden District, Town and Parish Councillor allowances for 2023/24, town and parish councils had been asked to contribute their comments and suggestions.

The Clerk confirmed that when WPC considered the final report for 2022/23 it agreed to freeze allowances at 2020/21 levels as these were felt to be sufficient. The Clerk was asked to feed this back and to query why councillors pay tax on their allowances.

10. GRASS CUTTING IN THE PARISH:

10.1 Consider recommendation from Finance Committee for next three year contract for cutting of grass on Parish Council land

September Finance Committee had recommended to Council a preferred contractor, following a quotes process. Council supported this recommendation.

002368 RESOLVED to accept the three-year grass cutting quote for 2023-2025 from Landscape Services: Year 1 £8477.26, Year 2 £8731.52, Year 3 £8906.09 + VAT.

The Clerk would notify the change of spec for the Newton Willows verge (now a wild verge) and confirm Tanyard cutting following further information regarding Groombridge Sports Ground Association's income. The Clerk would ask GSGA for their next meeting date.

10.2 Consider options for 2023/24 Urban Grass Cutting (East Sussex Highways)

ES Highways undertake 2 rural verge cuts and 2 urban verge cuts per year. Towns and parishes can choose to pay ES Highways to undertake a further 4 urban cuts, or opt for self-delivery of the urban cuts with a financial contributions from ES Highways.

002369 RESOLVED to fund an additional four urban grass cuts in 2023/24 from ES Highways at a cost of £976 for the year.

11. 20'S PLENTY – feedback from webinar

Cllr Obbard had attended this online meeting for WPC. He had provided a written report which was circulated prior to the meeting.

Cllr Obbard believes 20mph zones to be effective but he knows that some people do not feel that people respect them, and there is a lack of enforcement. Should changes be made it is likely that parish councils would be expected to pay for any signage or engineering in their parish.

Councillors asked whether more data could be obtained for average speeds on roads in the parish. They AGREED that residents should be asked for their views on whether 20mph limits should be introduced to enable them to know whether WPC should lobby ESCC for them.

12. CONSIDER DRAFT RESPONSE REGARDING GATWICK NIGHT FLIGHTS

Following the Pandemic the Government had granted permission for night flights. WPC had written to the Department for Transport to complain about

this approach at Gatwick and a response had been received to say that they would be continuing. A draft reply to that response had been circulated prior to the meeting and Council AGREED to submit the letter.

13. RESILIENCE & EMERGENCY PLANS – consider support to develop the template

East Sussex Association of Local Councils had notified Councils of the opportunity to utilise the skills of a Project Manager to write up to date plans at a fee of £50 per hour for 2 to 5 hours.

002370 Council agreed that its Emergency Plan required review and that an alternative template may be more relevant. Budget 4051 Community Resilience would cover the time of the Project Manager to produce a Plan. **RESOLVED** to engage a Project Manager through ESALC to produce an up to date Resilience/Emergency Plan for WPC.

14. POLICIES:

002371 **RESOLVED** to adopt the Protocol for Capital Expenditure (recommended by Finance Committee)

002372 **RESOLVED** to adopt the Prepaid Card Policy (recommended by Finance Committee)

002373 **RESOLVED** to adopt the Document Retention and Destruction Policy (review)

002374 **RESOLVED** to adopt the Community Engagement Statement of Intent (review)

002375 **RESOLVED** to adopt the Petitions policy (review)

002375 **RESOLVED** to adopt the Petitions policy

15. FINANCE:

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

15.2 To authorise the payment of October invoices/note regular payments

Current Bank A/c (HSBC)
Payments made between 01/10/2022 and 11/10/2022

Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
10/10/2022	Wealden District Council	BACS129	41.00			5101	500	41.00	Council tax (Phoenix Hse)
10/10/2022	Mulberry and Co.	BACS130	142.00		23.67	4007	101	118.33	Training
10/10/2022	Everflow	BACS131	34.91			5101	500	34.91	Water (Phoenix House/Post off)
10/10/2022	Muskateer Services Ltd	BACS132	98.40		16.40	4503	101	82.00	Legionella test
10/10/2022	CGS Ltd	BACS133	190.80		31.80	4503	101	159.00	Office alarm service
10/10/2022	SME IT Solutions	BACS134	362.54		60.42	4013	101	86.83	phone/bband
						4021	101	215.29	IT support
10/10/2022	Clued Up	BACS135	1,800.00			4101	102	1,800.00	Grant to support youth work
10/10/2022	Groombridge Bowling Club	BACS136	1,784.00			4101	102	1,784.00	Grants towards a new mower
10/10/2022	Withyham Kings' Hall	BACS137	450.00			4101	102	450.00	Grant towards 'Quiet Time Tue'
10/10/2022	St Johns Evangelist Crowboroug	BACS138	900.00			4101	102	900.00	Grants towards churchyard
10/10/2022	East Sussex Association of Loc	BACS139	144.00		24.00	4007	101	120.00	Cllr Training x3
10/10/2022	East Sussex Association of Loc	BACS139	96.00		16.00	4007	101	80.00	Planning training x2
10/10/2022	Society - Local Council Clerks	BACS140	144.00		24.00	4007	101	120.00	Training x4 (Clerks)
10/10/2022	Aragon Locks	BACS141	98.50			5101	500	98.50	Work at Phoenix House
10/10/2022	Withyham Parish Community Inte	BACS142	6,000.00			5001	500	6,000.00	Additional subsidy
10/10/2022	HR Services Partnership Ltd	BACS143	492.00		82.00	4041	101	410.00	Prepaid HR support (5hrs)
10/10/2022	David Newcombe Tree Services	BACS144	192.00		32.00	4230	201	160.00	Urgent - limb over road
10/10/2022	WDALC	BACS145	31.00			4008	101	31.00	Annual sub 22-23
10/10/2022	Groombridge Village Hall	BACS146	32.34			4064	101	32.34	C/Cafe hire Sep
10/10/2022	Biffa Waste Services Ltd	BACS147	56.09			4506	101	56.09	Office waste Sep
10/10/2022	B Aggutter	BACS148	20.25			4421	401	20.25	Highway Coord mileage Sep
10/10/2022	HMRC	BACS149	4,154.79			4001	101	4,154.79	Apr-Sep NI & Tax
10/10/2022	VARIOUS	BACS150	3,690.75			4000	101	3,690.75	Salaries Oct & Sep Overtime
10/10/2022	NEST Pensions	BACS151	289.54			4001	101	289.54	Pensions Oct
10/10/2022	Pioneer Security Services Co L	BACS152	233.50		38.92	5200	500	194.58	Slat wall (damp had to dry)
10/10/2022	Managed Technology	BACS153	156.90		26.15	4017	101	130.75	Copier charges
10/10/2022	Hertfordshire Association	BACS154	15.00			4007	101	15.00	Civility & Respect trainingx1
10/10/2022	DM Payroll	BACS155	114.00			4001	101	114.00	Payroll Services Apr-Sep22
10/10/2022	N Wealden Community Transport	BACS156	137.00			4401	401	137.00	Wealdlink Qtr3
10/10/2022	Prepaid card	CB1PPC1022	195.94			203		195.94	CB1 to PPC Oct22
10/10/2022	British Gas Life	DDBG1022	177.83			5101	500	177.83	Elec Phoenix Hse/Post Office
10/10/2022	HSBC	HSBC1022	8.00			4600	101	8.00	Charges to 230922
10/10/2022	The Premier Trust N A Houghton	SONH1022	625.00			4012	101	625.00	Council Oct22
10/10/2022	The Premier Trust T J Newman	SOTN1022	625.00			4012	101	625.00	Parish Office rent Oct
11/10/2022	Octopus Energy	DDOCTO1022	58.19			4502	101	58.19	Electricity Parish Office
Total Payments:			23,591.27	0.00	375.36			23,215.91	

Prepaid card

Payments made between 01/10/2022 and 11/10/2022

		Nominal Ledger Analysis						
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount Transaction Details
10/10/2022	Zoom Video Comms Ltd	PP32	14.39		2.40	4016	101	11.99 Zoom
10/10/2022	Milk & more	PP33	8.90			4510	101	8.90 office milk Sep
10/10/2022	AmazonUK	PP34	36.86		6.14	4015	101	30.72 velcro, cable ties, draught ex
10/10/2022	Go Custom	PP35	120.31		20.05	4020	101	100.26 teatowels c/cafe & APA
10/10/2022	Vistaprint	PP36	15.48		2.58	4015	101	12.90 Mug
Total Payments:			195.94	0.00	31.17			164.77

002376 RESOLVED to pay the October invoices listed above, to pay by BACS/sign the cheques accordingly

15.3 To consider quotes

There were no quotes.

15.4 Note the availability of the bank reconciliation file for inspection

Councillors were reminded that the bank reconciliation file can be inspected at any time by contacting the Clerk.

16. REPORTS FROM MEETINGS ATTENDED BY COUNCILLORS

Cllr Pardey had attended the Wealden Citizen's Advice AGM.

Cllr Obbard would be attending the Ashdown Forest Liaison meeting and asked to be notified if there was anything he should raise.

17. CLERK'S REPORT

Councillors were notified on the Sussex Police Road Safety briefing, should any be available to attend.

The High Weald Biennial Review 2020-22 document had been circulated for information.

18. CONSIDER WHETHER TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING DURING CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM 19 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

002377 RESOLVED to exclude press and public.

*The prospective councillor left the meeting.
Recordings of the meeting were paused.*

19. COUNCILLOR CONDUCT

002378 Councillors considered a recommendation from Staff Committee to make a Code of Conduct complaint. A confidential file note was made by the Clerk. **RESOLVED** that the Clerk should submit a Code of Conduct complaint to the District Monitoring Officer on behalf of WPC (2 councillors abstained).

002379 **20. TO INVITE THE PUBLIC TO RETURN TO THE MEETING IF THEY WERE EXCLUDED FOR THE PREVIOUS ITEMS** **RESOLVED** to invite press and public to return.

Recordings of the meeting were resumed.

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

- Councillor Co-options
- Blackham Teasley Mead play equipment
- Wild verge signage

22. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - the proposed date of the next Council meeting is Monday 14th November 2022 at 7.30pm, to be held at The Parish Office unless otherwise notified by the agenda.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm