

Minutes of the **WITHYHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING** held at **THE OLD STATION, GROOMBRIDGE** on **13th March 2023** at 7.30pm

PRESENT Cllrs Nick Anderson, Andrew Fane, Alan Gaukroger, Robert Gordon-James, Keith Obbard (as District Councillor for item 6), Jill Pardey, Jennie Paulson-Ellis, Penny Lawne, Judi Tuke, Paul Watkins (Chair), 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.

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 Diana Kelly - illness
Cllr Deviani Parekh-Jones – family commitment
County Cllr Taylor
District Cllr Millward

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Cllr Gordon-James and Watkins are Directors of Withyham Parish Community Interest Company (item 10) so have a declarable interest under Appendix B of the Code of Conduct, meaning that they may speak on the matter but not vote.

4. MINUTES

4.1. To resolve that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday 13th February 2023 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

002449 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th February 2023 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 2609	Cllr Winter	Met with young people at Groombridge Youth Club to listen to their views and would feed back to the Clerk
Pg. 2643	Clerk	An updated Councillor contact had been circulated by email
002439	Assistant Clerk	Notified ESCC that WPC is unable to Community Match 20 is Plenty should residents enquire
Pg. 2667	Clerk	Notified ESCC that WPC supports Rural Verges as Wildlife Corridors as long as road safety is not compromised
002440	Clerk	Memorial Bench Policy agreed

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002441	Clerk	Risk Assessment & Management policy agreed
002442	Clerk	Payment Process agreed
002443	Clerk	Salary Procedure agreed

Actions outstanding from previous minutes

- Cllrs Fane and Gordon-James are keen to start helping with the Speed Indicator Device now that they are trained. They would contact the Highways Coordinator to arrange.

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2067	Clerk	Enquire whether the Crime Audit Officer can assess Withyham and Blackham
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
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. 2574	Clerk	Close the 'HSBC Deposit account' once new account is set up
002386	Council	Match fund a piece of play equipment up to the value of £2,500 at Teasley Mead Recreation Ground
Pg. 2635	Cllr Anderson	Put on Next Door that IPSOS MORI will be conducting surveys with a sample of electors to check the accuracy of the 2022/23 electoral register
Pg. 2636	Councillors	Should any councillors wish to help at Park Corner contact Stephanie
Pg. 2638	Clerk	Earmarked Reserves to be set up totalling £31,500 from 2023/24
Pg. 2638	Councillors	Notify the Clerk if they do not wish to take their allowance in 2023/24
Pg. 2666	Cllr Obbard	Support Cllr Tuke on her first Speedwatch session,
Pg. 2666	Assistant Clerk	Circulate Speedwatch dates to volunteers
Pg. 2666	Community Engagement Coordinator	Seek further Speedwatch volunteers
Pg. 2666	Clerk	Speedwatch to be a standing item on Council agendas
Pg. 2667	Clerk	Broker a meeting with Horder Centre and St John's School (Cllrs Pardey and Gaukroger)
Pg. 2668	Clerks	Support publicity, budget and risk assessments for the Big Coronation Lunch
Pg. 2668	Clerk	Grant permission for Big Lunches on WPC land to residents in other parts of the Parish

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Pg. 2668	Community Engagement Coordinator	Create display boards with WPC volunteering opportunities to display at the Groombridge Big Lunch and on the website
Pg. 2668	Clerks/ Chair	Arrange an opening event for Groombridge playground
002445	Clerk	Dispose of the rights of way trailer

Actions from these Minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2675	Cllrs Fane and Gordon-James	Contact the Highways Coordinator to arrange helping with the Speed Indicator Device
Pg. 2677	Assistant Clerk	Remind Council what the restrictions are for litterpicks and whether there is any way of being able to operate them roadside
Pg. 2677	Clerk	Grant permission to resident to use Groombridge Recreation Ground on 2 July
002450	2 members of Finance Committee	Sign Old Station leases once the Clerk confirms they are ready
Pg. 2679	Assistant Clerk	Wealden Lottery promotional material to be circulated with the newsletter/bulletin deliveries
Pg. 2679	Councillors	Confirm attendance to a meeting on 27 th March to discuss plans for a Coronation Big Lunch
Pg. 2680	Clerks	Speedwatch volunteer opportunity to be advertised via social media and at the APA
002452	March Finance Committee	Agree payment of any remaining invoices for the 2022/23 year budgets, to be reported to the April Council meeting
Pg. 2681	Councillors and volunteers	Bulletin available for distribution
Pg. 2681	Councillors	Diarise 20 th May for the APA

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 Planning Committee – 13th February 2023 - noted

5.2 Planning Committee – 27th February 2023 - noted

6. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT and COUNTY COUNCILLORS

County Cllr Taylor had provided a report to the Clerk which was reported to the meeting:

- The Full County Council meeting in February had agreed the budget for 2023/24
- Further to WPCs concerns about local bus services, Cllr Taylor had made a plea for improved bus services in the north of the county
- A new Climate Emergency Plan had been presented at the last County Council meeting. Its commitment to zero carbon buildings should be taken into account when assessing planning applications
- Cllr Taylor had provided a briefing on the transition plans for the new ESCC Highways contract with Balfour Beatty to commence 1 May

2023. The Clerk had forwarded this on to Councillors by email for information

- Cllr Taylor intends to speak with ESCC Officers about how to avoid inappropriate road diversions in future
- Cllr Taylor intends to follow up on poor quality surface repairs with ESCC Officers (Cllr Gordon-James had recently reported one near the bridge on Station Road, Groombridge)

District Cllr Obbard had provided a written report which had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- WDC is supporting the Great British Spring Clean 2023
- The 'Explore Wealden' guide is available online, with some leaflets available in the parish office
- WDC is consulting on a new Community Sports Hub in Hellingly
- The first EV charging points are being installed in WDC car parks. Others will follow in tranches
- The WDC 2021/22 accounts had still not been signed off and WDC is unhappy with the Auditors
- An Enforcement Notice has been issued to the Dorset Arms for extra restaurant space
- No Appeal date has been set yet for the Ardenvale Development

7. WARD REPORTS

(a) Groombridge Ward (Groombridge) to include verges Eridge Road/Park Corner Lane

Cllr Anderson reported on the recent Groombridge Ward meeting where a range of topics had been discussed such as setting up Neighbourhood Watch along The Ridge, bin emptying at the shops in Groombridge and litterpicking. The intention is to meet every 3 to 4 months and feed into the Council agenda items where action is required.

Councillors agreed that it is unfortunate that WPC is unable to organise litterpicks along pavements due to ESCC requirements. They asked the Assistant Clerk to remind Council what the restrictions are and whether there is any way of being able to operate litterpicks. It was noted that groups such as Brighter Crowborough appear to do so.

The Clerk had received a request from a resident who wished to hold a sport based party for their child on Groombridge Recreation Ground on 2 July. This was agreed on the proviso that other people would not be prevented from using the Recreation Ground.

(b) Groombridge Ward (Withyham/Blackham)

The B2188 would be closed on 27 March for repairs and a diversion would be in place.

(c) Marden's Hill Ward

A Ward meeting will be set up presently.

The Clerk is to set up a meeting with the Horder Centre and St John's School about road safety.

People have been parking on the road rather than paying the Ashdown Forest Conservators' parking charges at St John's car park.

8. OLD STATION LEASE & SUBLEASE UPDATE

A report had been circulated prior to the meeting outlining what had happened since the last Council meeting:

- Solar panels and more loft insulation have been installed at the Old Station. The building now has an Energy Performance Certificate 'E' rating and a new lease term can be granted
- A solicitor has been engaged for the Parish Council (Cooper Burnett)
- A meeting has taken place between SVR (WPC's tenants) and the Groombridge Old Station Lease Working Group to confirm terms for the sub-lease
- A new floorplan to accompany the sublease has been agreed with SVR, to reflect changes to the entrance hall layout since 2013
- WPC's solicitor expects that 1st April isn't realistic so we might need to put a tenancy at will in place as a holding measure

Councillors noted this report.

002450 **RESOLVED** that due to the tight timescales, the signing of the leases were to be delegated to 2 members of Finance Committee once the Clerk confirms they are ready

9. GROOMBRIDGE PLAYGROUND UPDATE

The Clerk reported that the installation of the new playground equipment is nearing completion. A safety inspection would be required before opening, and the grass would need time to establish. It is likely that it will be ready to open on 20 May but this is to be confirmed. Posters will be displayed at the play area explaining why it cannot be opened immediately.

Fundraising is ongoing for the accessible roundabout and it is hoped that an official opening will take place once that is installed.

Cllr Anderson asked about fencing as he is a member of Groombridge Cricket Club and they have concerns about there being no fencing round the play area. The Clerk clarified that Council had previously decided to spend funds on equipment rather than fencing as it is not a requirement to have fencing. Subsequently the Cricket Club had voiced concerns to the Clerk so the Clerk and Cllr Kelly had met with them. WPC's insurers had stated to the Clerk that liability for members of the public that might be hurt by cricket balls when using any part of the Recreation Ground would lie with whoever created the risk, i.e. the Cricket Club. At that meeting the Clerk had explained this to the Cricket Club and suggested that if their risk assessments indicated a concern they should consider what appropriate mitigations they could put in place.

Cllr Anderson stated that the Cricket Club had wanted WPC to reinstate a low fence but were instead looking at a higher fence at their boundary and queried whether WPC could help fund that. Other Councillors did not think that a replacement low fence at the playground was needed for safety

reasons for cricket balls. Cllr Watkins reminded Cllr Anderson of WPC's Grants which the Cricket Club could apply for.

WPC has a RoSPA safety inspection every year and that has not raised concerns about proximity to the Cricket Ground in the past. Before the replacement play area can be opened a full inspection will be required; should that recommend fencing or other safety measures then WPC would consider them.

10. GROOMBRIDGE POST OFFICE UPDATE

Cllr Watkins updated the meeting that since the last Council meeting, Post Office Counters had acknowledged that Groombridge Post Office should be classified a Community Post Office and receive additional commission. Back funding of commission should be received which would transform the cashflow.

There had been a change in the WPCIC Directors and recruitment for a fifth was underway. This role and other volunteering roles would be advertised at the March Community Café, which the Post Office was hosting in order to raise funds and awareness of how residents can help.

Groombridge Post Office and Shop is one of the good causes for the new Wealden Lottery, which would also be advertised at the March Community Café. It was requested that promotional material would also be circulated with the newsletter/bulletin deliveries.

Phoenix House continues to attract rent in order to pay the Public Works Loan which was secured to buy the building and save the post office. Although the current tenant has moved out they are paying up to the end of their tenancy and advertising will restart for new tenants in the Spring.

Following delegated authority being granted by the last Finance Committee, a quote for a replacement window had been accepted from JP Glass at £675.84.

Some works are needed in the garden, namely the bay tree to be trimmed, climbers on the boundary wall and summer house to be cut back hard, and guttering to be installed on the summer house to prevent damp.

11. ELECTIONS 2023

The Clerk had circulated guidance to existing councillors wishing to stand in the May Parish Elections, and information was also being circulated to prospective councillors via social media and the WPC Bulletin.

12. CORONATION BIG LUNCH

Cllr Kelly had invited Councillors to a meeting on 27th March to discuss plans for a Coronation Big Lunch at Groombridge Recreation Ground. Councillors were asked to confirm their attendance.

Items for discussion would include whether WPC had sufficient councillor help to run the event, what roles would be required before, on and after the event, and which date to hold it due to a Village Hall hire clash on 7th May.

13. SPEEDWATCH

Cllr Tuke is keen to build the team of Speedwatch volunteers. It was agreed that the opportunity would be advertised via social media as well as at the Annual Parish Assembly in May.

Cllr Tuke had attended a Teams meeting on road safety. From 30 April to September there would be enhanced police activity around dangerous driving. The police are keen to focus on prevention rather than reaction.

Operation Crackdown allows members of the public to report anti-social driving and parking online. Evidence can be uploaded from mobile phones and Dashcams.

14. FINANCE:**14.1 Note the report showing payments made to date against budgets**

Noted

14.2 Authorise the payment of March invoices/note regular payments

Current Bank A/c (HSBC)

Payments made between 14/03/2023 and 14/03/2023

Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
14/03/2023	Ray Bailey	BACS223	40.00			4503	101	40.00	Window Cleaning
14/03/2023	C Coley	BACS224	240.00			5101	500	240.00	Ph/Hse pest control
14/03/2023	JAKK Country Furniture	BACS225	1,310.64		218.44	4420	401	1,092.20	Park Comer fingerpost
14/03/2023	CSS Ltd	BACS226	123.60		20.60	4501	101	103.00	Additional panic alarm
14/03/2023	Delia Thornton	BACS227	120.00			4051	101	120.00	Emergency Resilience package
14/03/2023	SME IT Solutions	BACS228	456.91		76.15	4013	101	87.61	Phone bband
						4021	101	293.15	IT support
14/03/2023	Viking Direct	BACS229	69.52		11.59	4051	101	57.93	stationery
14/03/2023	EJP Fire Protection Ltd	BACS230	108.00		18.00	4503	101	90.00	Fire alarms maintenance
14/03/2023	Neil Davies/Weld Done	BACS231	100.00			4402	401	100.00	Fence repair Reading Room
14/03/2023	Store4Biz	BACS232	72.00		12.00	4506	101	60.00	Paper Shredding
14/03/2023	Groombridge Village Hall	BACS233	35.60			4064	101	35.60	Cafe hall hire Feb
14/03/2023	Biffa Waste Services Ltd	BACS234	88.23		14.70	4506	101	73.53	Office bins Feb
14/03/2023	Wealden District Council	BACS235	858.00		143.00	4213	201	455.00	Dog Bins Qtr4
						4211	201	260.00	Litter Bins Qtr4
14/03/2023	B Agutter	BACS236	2.70			4421	401	2.70	Highways mileage
14/03/2023	Various	BACS237	387.00			4011	101	387.00	Cllr Allowances
14/03/2023	Various	BACS238	4,065.84			4000	101	4,065.84	Salaries Mar
14/03/2023	N Brett	BACS239	6.60			4510	101	6.60	Milk
14/03/2023	HMRC	BACS240	2,290.72			4001	101	2,290.72	Tax & NI Qtr4
14/03/2023	R Carr Partnership	BACS241	300.00		50.00	4260	203	250.00	Hedge cutting Teasley Mead
14/03/2023	Ray Bailey	BACS242	40.00			4503	101	40.00	Windowcleaning
14/03/2023	Ray Bailey	BACS242	-40.00			4503	101	-40.00	VOID duplicate
14/03/2023	Demonskinz	BACS243	36.00		6.00	4201	201	30.00	2 banners GRG playarea
14/03/2023	Prepaid card	CB1PPC0323	225.31				203	225.31	Cb1 to Ppaid Card Ma23
14/03/2023	J Pardey	CHQ100342	83.50			4011	101	83.50	members allowance
14/03/2023	NEST Pensions	DDNEST0323	428.80			4001	101	428.80	Pensions Mar
14/03/2023	Octopus Energy	DDOCTO0323	211.32			4502	101	211.32	Parish Office Elec
14/03/2023	Opus Energy	DDOPUS0323	109.61			4502	101	109.61	Parish Office Gas
14/03/2023	HSBC	HSBCUK0323	8.00			4600	101	8.00	Bank charges Jan-Feb
14/03/2023	The Premier Trust N A Houghton	SONH0323	625.00			4012	101	625.00	Parish office rent
14/03/2023	The Premier Trust T J Newman	SOTN0323	625.00			4012	101	625.00	Parish Office rent
Total Payments:			13,027.90	0.00	570.48			12,457.42	

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Payments made between 08/03/2023 and 14/03/2023

Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
14/03/2023	Jacksons Fencing	PP58	70.38		11.73	4221	201	58.65	posts for playground sign
							327	-58.65	posts for playground sign
						6000	201	58.65	posts for playground sign
14/03/2023	Milk & More	PP59	9.20			4510	101	9.20	Milk
14/03/2023	Zoom Video Comms Ltd	PP60	15.59		2.60	4016	101	12.99	Zoom Mar
14/03/2023	Cheeky Panda	PP61	39.99			4015	101	39.99	Toilet roll
14/03/2023	Land Registry/Gov.UK	PP62	6.00			4415	401	6.00	Title Plans (RoW)
14/03/2023	AmazonUK	PP63	12.93		2.16	4015	101	10.77	Draught proofing
14/03/2023	Nimble	PP64	32.00			4007	101	32.00	NALC Elearning
14/03/2023	NALC	PP65	39.22			4007	101	39.22	Training
Total Payments:			225.31	0.00	16.49			208.82	

002451 **RESOLVED** to pay the March invoices listed above, to pay by BACS/sign the cheques accordingly

002452 **RESOLVED** that March Finance Committee should agree payment of any remaining invoices for the 2022/23 year budgets, to be reported to the April Council meeting.

14.3 Consider quotes

There were no further quotes; see item 10 regarding replacement window at Phoenix House.

15. REPORTS FROM MEETINGS ATTENDED BY COUNCILLORS

Cllr Anderson had attended the Groombridge Sports Ground Association AGM. They acknowledged the grass cutting that WPC had paid for at the Tanyard over the years and would start contributing from 2024/25. GSGA would reintroduce a Family Sports Day to help raise funds in 2023, following a break during the Pandemic.

16. CLERK'S REPORT

The Bulletin would be available for distribution this week, Councillors and volunteers were thanked in advance for their help.

The Annual Parish Assembly would take place on Saturday 20th May to coincide with the Community Café. All councillors are asked to attend to help.

17. MATTERS OF URGENT IMPORTANCE FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDA: None.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - the proposed date of the next Council meeting is Monday 17th April 2023 at 7.30pm, to be held at The Parish Office unless otherwise notified by the agenda.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm