

Minutes of the **WITHYHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING** held at **THE OLD STATION, GROOMBRIDGE**
on **4th September 2023** at 7pm

PRESENT Cllrs Nick Anderson, Robert Gordon-James, Diana Kelly (Chair), Deviani Parekh-Jones, Penny Lawne, Judi Tuke, Linsey Winter

In attendance: Deborah Siddle - Clerk (minutes)
Natalie Brett – Assistant Clerk (to item 11)
Member of the public – prospective councillor (to item 11)
District Cllr Jessika Hulbert (to item 8)
County Cllr Georgia Taylor (to item 8)

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 was one member of the public present as they are interested in becoming a Councillor. They introduced themselves and were welcomed to the meeting.

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 Alan Gaukroger – illness
Cllr Jill Pardey – family commitment

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – none.

4. MINUTES

4.1. Resolve that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday 10th July 2023 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

The date of the previous meeting had been incorrectly noted as July rather than June. This was amended on the minutes.

002556 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th July 2023 were approved with the above amendment.

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

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2716	Assistant Clerk	New generic content for noticeboards produced; displayed by Cllr Anderson
Pg. 2724	Cllr Kelly	Thanked Mel Byford for the Groombridge Coronation races
Pg. 2739	Cllrs Tuke and Gordon-James	Discussion on best approach for Newton Willows bench not required – to go on Maintenance Person list
Pg. 2739	Cllr Parekh-Jones	Maintenance Person to remove bench near Groombridge Place

WPC/4.9.2023 – 002800

Pg. 2743	Clerk	Coffee van pitch at the playground explored but not feasible (utilities)
Pg. 2744	Clerk	Visioning session arranged for 25 November
Pg. 2764	Clerk	Staff Committee considered Maintenance Person role
Pg. 2766	Cllr Gaukroger/Pardey	Attended a site visit on Marden's Hill regarding speeding
Pg. 2766	Cllr Gordon-James	Spoke with the Community Engagement Coordinator about cutting the strip round the wild verge. To be factored into next year planning.
Pg. 2766	Clerk	Fed back to local business and signposted WDC's Business Support page
002532	Clerk	Adopted the Climate and Ecology Advisory Committee Terms of Reference
Pg. 2767	Councillors	Rota to undertake daily checks of Groombridge Recreation Ground agreed
Pg. 2767	Clerk	Pizza van contacted about disposal of boxes
Pg. 2767	Clerk	Cricket Club reminded to close the 5 bar gate
Pg. 2768	Clerk	Fed back to resident that WPC would not install CCTV for the youth shelter
Pg. 2768	Clerk	Councillor visual checks added to risk assessment for Groombridge Recreation Ground
Pg. 2770	Clerk	Circulated to Councillors information on D-Day 80 th Anniversary
Pg. 2770	Chair and Clerk	Met with one of two prospective Groombridge councillors

Actions outstanding from previous minutes

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
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. 2717	Clerk	Request a Traffic Management Plan for the next May Fair
Pg. 2718	Cllr Anderson	Speak with the owner of Premier Stores regarding managing the bin
Pg. 2718	Clerk	Provide bullet points for the discussion with the shop owner
Pg. 2724	Clerk	Consider building drainage works into the 2024/25 budget
Pg. 2743	Clerk	Seek new Councillors from Withyham and Blackham

WPC/4.9.2023 – 002801

Pg. 2743	Clerk	Arrange a follow up meeting with the Playground Group in six months
Pg. 2744	Clerk and agreed councillors	Review the existing Parish Plan to identify anything still to be done and help inform 2024/25 budgets
Pg. 2765	Cllr Taylor	Feedback more information on the Flexibus initiative
Pg. 2766	Cllr Hulbert	Find out if WDC is responsible for fixing the street name sign on Corseley Road
Pg. 2766	Cllr Pardey	Flag up events in Withyham so more councillors might attend
Pg. 2767	Clerk	Draft a letter from to the Conservators requesting improvements to the St John's Forest car park surface and access
Pg. 2770	Air Traffic Councillors	Notify Clerk of any action required relating to Gatwick second runway
Pg. 2770	Cllr Pardey	Look out for a councillor candidate from Marden's Hill

Actions from these Minutes

Cllr Parekh-Jones to help tow the trailer from the container to the parish office for it to be sold.

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2801	Cllrs Gordon-James & Parekh-Jones	Coordinate moving the trailer from the container to the parish office to facilitate its sale
Pg. 2802	Cllr Taylor	Follow up on discussions regarding Flexibus
Pg. 2802	Cllr Kelly	Find out whether ESCC had made contact at the next Wealdlink meeting
Pg. 2802	Cllr Anderson	Speak with Cllr Hulbert about Gatwick
Pg. 2803	Councillors	Request that the vehicle gate is kept closed at the meeting with Groombridge Cricket Club
Pg. 2803	Cllr Tuke	Provide wording seeking three more Speedwatch volunteers in the next parish magazine
Pg. 2804	Assistant Clerk	Provide Councillors with the link for reporting any highways issues
Pg. 2804	Cllr Anderson/Assistant Clerk	Draft response to rural verge consultation with Climate and Ecology Advisory Group and Highways Coordinator input
Pg. 2804	Council	Agree response to rural verge consultation at future meeting
002557	Clerks	Submit the draft response to the DEFRA Consultation on Hedgerows
002559	Clerk	Adopt the revised Child & Vulnerable Person Protection Policy
Pg. 2808	Cllrs Winter and Parekh-Jones	Contact the Scout Leader to explore links with WPC
Pg. 2808	Councillors and staff	Diarise the Business Planning (Visioning) session on Saturday 25 th November at 9.30am
Pg. 2808	Council	Future agenda items listed

5. COMMITTEE MINUTES

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 – 10th July 2023 - noted

5.2 Climate and Ecology Advisory Committee – 25th July 2023 - noted

5.3 Planning Committee – 31st July 2023 - noted

5.4 Staff & Administration Committee - 31st July 2023 - noted

5.5 Planning Committee – 14th August 2023 - noted

5.6 Finance Committee - 14th August 2023 - noted

6. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT and COUNTY COUNCILLORS

County Cllr Taylor explained that there hadn't been any ESCC meetings in August. She had met with residents of Marden's Hill with an ESCC Officer and representatives of WPC regarding speed limit concerns. The Clerk confirmed that a resident was attending the October WPC meeting and that it would be an item on that agenda.

ESCC believes there to be just one school in the County with reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) issues; further assessments are being undertaken.

Cllr Taylor urged the ESCC Officer responsible for Flexibus to talk with Wealdlink following WPC's concerns that it duplicates the existing service. Cllr Taylor will follow up and Cllr Kelly will find out whether contact has been made at the next Wealdlink parishes meeting.

Cllr Taylor was asked for her views on the new East Sussex Highways contract. She felt that the quality of repair is improved but felt that there are still many outstanding works to be completed in this division.

District Cllr Hulbert had provided a written report prior to the meeting. She explained that she had attended a Campaign to Protect Rural England planning training session and will provide updates of any issues that are pertinent to our area. She had also attended WDC Planning Committee meetings where difficult decisions were made, including overturning an application near Hailsham over concerns about extra demand on the water supply.

Cllr Hulbert highlighted her concerns about the proposed new expansion of Gatwick Airport, namely increases in passenger numbers and carbon emissions as well as non-carbon emissions. In addition to the climate impacts she has concerns about those living underneath the flight paths being impacted by air pollution, noise pollution, bird kills and added congestion to roads. A number of Councils, including Wealden District Council, have complained about the poor consultation process. WPC no longer has an Air Traffic Committee as the remit is within that of the Climate and Ecology Advisory Committee. Cllr Anderson would speak with Cllr Hulbert.

Cllr Hulbert is monitoring the progress of discussions undertaken with South East Water and Southern Water closely following water supply issues; she will keep WPC updated.

Cllr Hulbert is holding an informal meeting at The Junction Pub on Wednesday 20th September for residents to get to know her and for her to meet residents.

7. WARD REPORTS

(a) Groombridge Ward (Groombridge)

The Clerk was asked about the growth around the base of the Lime trees at Groombridge Recreation Ground. It was confirmed that the Clerk was obtaining quotes to remove this as well as raising the lower branches to allow the mower better access. This would go to the next Finance Committee where they would also need to consider amending the Trees Policy which states that the epicormic growth would be removed by volunteers as it is a visual concern rather than causing harm to the tree.

The Clerk had contacted Groombridge Cricket Club about keeping the vehicle gate to the Recreation Ground closed but it was still being left open. It would be raised at the meeting with the Cricket Club.

Following the last Finance Committee meeting the consultation about a dogs on leads policy at Groombridge Recreation Ground was now live and the results would be considered at October Council.

(b) Groombridge Ward (Withyham/Blackham)

Cllr Hulbert had been trying to encourage residents to become a parish councillor.

(c) Marden's Hill Ward

Concerns about the speed limit at Mardens Hill had been raised at Item 6 above.

8. HIGHWAYS RELATED MATTERS

8.1 Litter-picking by the highway

The Assistant Clerk had obtained the most up to date guidance from ESCC about volunteers working by the highway. This remains very prohibitive and means that WPC is restricted to litter-picking on its own land and not roadside or on the pavement.

WPC is aware that there are volunteer groups elsewhere that might not follow these rules but, as a Council, WPC has to work to ESCC's rules when on their land.

It was noted that the guidance is very clear that no power tools may be used by volunteers on ESCC land, and that this would apply to volunteers on rights of way also.

8.2 Speedwatch update

There were two 1 hour long sessions in August, with the last one being passed by 79 cars of which 7 were over the speed limit.

Cllr Tuke hopes to run two to three sessions per month and would like three more volunteers; the next parish magazine insert would include this request.

It was noted that Operation Crackdown now accepts dashcam footage and that anyone can make reports.

Cllr Tuke was thanked for revitalising Speed Watch.

Cllrs Hulbert and Taylor left the meeting.

9. GROOMBRIDGE POST OFFICE & SHOP – cashflow and update

A report and cashflow had been circulated prior to the meeting. In future a quarterly report and cashflow would be provided. Future meetings will receive more information on the post office counter in the reports.

Cllr Gordon-James explained that leaflet drops would be taking place to highlight what is available in the shop and to encourage people to join the Wealden Lottery.

The Directors are working on moving the business from being a Community Interest Company to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

The Directors were thanked for their work, as was the Manager who was commended for her commitment and hard work.

10. RURAL VERGES AS WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

10.1 Consider feedback on ESCC consultation

WPC agreed earlier in the year to trialling less cuts of rural verges to encourage biodiversity.

ESCC is conducting a survey in the areas that are part of the trial and this had been shared with residents in the church and village magazines.

It was noted that residents would benefit from more information from ESCC on how to report safety concerns such as obscured signs and sight lines. Councillors asked the Assistant Clerk to provide them with the link for reporting any issues.

Council AGREED to respond to the consultation. Cllr Anderson would draft a response with the Climate and Ecology Advisory Committee, the Assistant Clerk would then liaise with the Highways Coordinator to include any comments on road safety. When ready Council would agree the response.

10.2 Consider the draft response to the DEFRA Consultation on Hedgerows

A draft response had been provided by the Climate and Ecology Advisory Committee.

It was queried whether ditch maintenance would be an issue if hedgerows were not cut regularly. It was confirmed that ESCC has a ditch clearance schedule.

002557 **RESOLVED** that the Clerks would submit the draft response to the DEFRA Consultation on Hedgerows.

11. NEW RESIDENT WELCOME CARD – reminder

Councillors were reminded that there is a welcome card with an insert of useful information which they may use if they learn of new people moving to the parish. These can be obtained by contacting the parish office.

The Assistant Clerk and the Member of the Public left the meeting.

12. NOTE REQUESTS AUTHORISED UNDER CLERK'S DELEGATED AUTHORITY – Groombridge Post Office organisational structure, Use of Groombridge Recreation Ground for after school football club

Following email consultation with Councillors, and under delegated authority, the Clerk had confirmed to Withyham Parish Community Interest Company that WPC was supportive of it moving from a Community Interest Company to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

Following email consultation with Councillors, and under delegated authority, the Clerk had confirmed that Msporti could use Groombridge Recreation Ground for the after-school football club. This would be reviewed before Christmas as councillors did not want the provision to stop but agreed that at that time an approach should be made to the Tanyard by WPC to see if an agreement could be reached to return to the Tanyard as it is more suited.

13. FINANCE:

13.1 Note the report showing payments made to date against budgets
Noted.

13.2 Note payments made since July Council meeting (delegated authority)

Time:12:52

Cashbook 1

User: DS

Current Bank A/c (HSBC)

Payments made between 11/07/2023 and 14/08/2023

Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
11/07/2023	Mrs S Chapman	BACS87	7.98			4064	101	7.98	Bags for community cafe
11/07/2023	D Siddle	BACS88	18.00			4015	101	18.00	Reimburse keys cut
11/07/2023	W Swift & Son	BACS89	180.00		30.00	4220	201	150.00	Drainage investigation
						327		-150.00	Drainage investigation
						6000	201	150.00	Drainage investigation
18/07/2023	Octopus Energy	DDOCT00723	87.58			4502	101	87.58	Parish Office elec
14/08/2023	Society - Local Council Clerks	BACS100	72.00		12.00	4007	101	60.00	Finance training
14/08/2023	Society - Local Council Clerks	BACS101	222.00			4008	101	222.00	Membership fee (DS)
14/08/2023	Playsafety Limited (RoSPA)	BACS102	270.00		45.00	4222	201	75.00	Play equip inspections (Gb)
						4270	203	150.00	Play equip inspections (BG&TM)
14/08/2023	Groombridge Village Hall	BACS103	35.56			4064	101	35.56	Com Cafe hire Jul23
14/08/2023	SME IT Solutions	BACS104	114.96		19.16	4013	101	95.80	Phone/Bband Jul
14/08/2023	Managed Technology	BACS105	36.00		6.00	4017	101	30.00	Copier support Jul-Oct
14/08/2023	Various	BACS106	4,204.84			4005	101	126.00	Jul o/t
						4000	101	4,078.84	Aug Salaries
14/08/2023	S J Osborne & Son	BACS90	36.00		6.00	4503	101	30.00	Key stuck in lock (office)
14/08/2023	Ray Bailey	BACS91	40.00			4503	101	40.00	Windows (parish office)
14/08/2023	Martin & Co (RGJ)	BACS92	90.00			5101	500	90.00	Gas cert (Ph Hse) Zap
14/08/2023	Everflow Water	BACS93	22.54			5101	500	22.54	Water (Ph Hse)
14/08/2023	D Siddle	BACS94	7.10			4510	101	7.10	Coffee (parish office)
14/08/2023	WPCIC	BACS95	1,750.00			5001	500	1,750.00	Post Office Subsidy (Aug)
14/08/2023	David Newcombe Tree Services	BACS96	180.00		30.00	4230	201	150.00	cut up clear fallen limb (GRG)
14/08/2023	British Gas	BACS97	194.78			5101	500	194.78	Elec Ph Hse
14/08/2023	Biffa Waste Services Ltd	BACS98	88.23		14.70	4506	101	73.53	Office bins July
14/08/2023	East Sussex Association of Loc	BACS99	96.00		16.00	4007	101	80.00	Planning Training
14/08/2023	Business Stream	DDBS0923	1.00			4502	101	1.00	Water charges Old Station
14/08/2023	NEST pensions	DDNEST0823	444.22			4001	101	444.22	Pensions (Aug)
14/08/2023	Octopus Energy	DDOCT0823	89.39			4502	101	89.39	Elec office July
14/08/2023	Opus Energy	DDOPUS0823	36.77			4502	101	36.77	Gas Old Station
14/08/2023	HSBC	HSBC0923	8.00			4600	101	8.00	Bank charges to 23
14/08/2023	Prepaid card	PPC0823	30.28				203	30.28	cb1 to ppc Aug23
14/08/2023	The Premier Trust N A Houghton	SONH0823	666.67			4012	101	666.67	Rent old station Aug
14/08/2023	The Premier Trust T J Newman	SOTN0823	666.66			4012	101	666.66	Rent old station Aug
Total Payments:			9,696.56	0.00	178.86			9,517.70	
Prepaid card									
Payments made between 11/07/2023 and 14/08/2023									

Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
14/08/2023	Milk & More	PP24	11.50			4510	101	11.50	milk parish office
14/08/2023	Zoom Video Comms Ltd	PP25	15.59		2.60	4016	101	12.99	Zoom subs
14/08/2023	AmazonUK	PP26	3.19		0.53	4015	101	2.66	adhesive hooks
Total Payments:			30.28	0.00	3.13			27.15	

13.3 Authorise the payment of September invoices/note regular payments

Time: 11:31

Cashbook 1

User: DS

Current Bank A/c (HSBC)

Payments made between 01/09/2023 and 04/09/2023

Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
04/09/2023	WPCIC	BACS107	1,750.00			5001	500	1,750.00	Post office/Shop subsidy Sep
04/09/2023	Everflow	BACS108	35.35			5101	500	35.35	Water (Post office/Ph Hse)
04/09/2023	Viking Direct	BACS109	166.62		27.77	4015	101	138.85	Stationery & paper
04/09/2023	Commercial Services Trading Lt	BACS110	1,312.93		218.82	4206	201	242.14	Grass cutting Apr-Jun
						4205	201	426.01	Grass cutting Apr-Jun
						4261	203	116.13	Grass cutting Apr-Jun
						4260	203	309.83	Grass cutting Apr-Jun
04/09/2023	DM Payroll Services Ltd	BACS111	114.00			4040	101	114.00	Payroll Admin Apr-Sep
04/09/2023	Gulliver Timber Treatments Ltd	BACS112	360.00		60.00	4500	101	300.00	Damp remedial works
04/09/2023	SME IT Solutions	BACS113	112.04		18.67	4013	101	93.37	Phone/Bband Aug
04/09/2023	SME IT Solutions	BACS113	1,427.44		237.91	4021	101	1,189.53	IT support May-Aug
04/09/2023	SME IT Solutions	BACS113	356.86		59.48	4021	101	297.38	IT support (Sep)
04/09/2023	PKF Littlejohn	BACS114	1,008.00		168.00	4040	101	840.00	AGAR 22/23 audit
04/09/2023	Dorset Arms Angling Club	BACS115	215.00			4101	102	215.00	Grant for water test kit
04/09/2023	D Siddle	BACS116	9.90			4270	203	9.90	Mileage (play checks)
04/09/2023	N Brett	BACS117	4.95			4510	101	4.95	Milk (aug)
04/09/2023	Society - Local Council Clerks	BACS118	18.00		3.00	4007	101	15.00	Training re AI
04/09/2023	R Bailey	BACS119	40.00			4503	101	40.00	Windowcleaning
04/09/2023	Wealden District Council	BACS120	907.50		151.25	4213	201	481.25	Dog bins Qtr2
						4211	201	275.00	litter bins Qtr2
04/09/2023	Biffa Waste Services Ltd	BACS121	65.63		10.94	4506	101	54.69	Office bins Aug
04/09/2023	Various	BACS122	4,079.04			4000	101	4,079.04	Salaries Sep
04/09/2023	Prepaid card	Cb1 PPC 09	207.93			203		207.93	Cb1 to prepaid card Sep23
04/09/2023	British Gas Lite	DBG0923	130.40			5101	500	130.40	Elec Post Office Ph Hse
04/09/2023	Various	DDNEST0923	444.22			4001	101	444.22	Pensions Sep23
04/09/2023	The Premier Trust N A Houghton	SONH0923	666.66			4012	101	666.66	Rent Sep23
04/09/2023	The Premier Trust T J Newman	SOTN0923	666.67			4012	101	666.67	Rent Sep
Total Payments:			14,099.14	0.00	955.84			13,143.30	

Prepaid card

Payments made between 01/09/2023 and 04/09/2023

Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
04/09/2023	Wealden District Council	PP27	63.00			4260	203	63.00	Wasp nest Teasley Mead
04/09/2023	Zoom Video Comms Ltd	PP28	15.59		2.60	4016	101	12.99	Zoom subs
04/09/2023	Milk & More	PP29	9.20			4510	101	9.20	Milk parish office
04/09/2023	Adobe	PP30	21.14		3.52	4016	101	17.62	Adobe sub
04/09/2023	Ebay	PP31	99.00			4421	401	99.00	Wheelie bin speed stickers
Total Payments:			207.93	0.00	6.12			201.81	

002558 RESOLVED to pay the September invoices listed above, to pay by BACS/sign the cheques accordingly

13.4 Receive the external Audit report (2022/23)

WPC had received an unqualified external audit. Under 'other matters' PKF had noted that no year-end bank statement had been provided for the prepaid card. Mulberry & Co had confirmed that this could not be provided.

13.5 Consider quotes - none

14. POLICIES

14.1 Child & Vulnerable Person Protection Policy (recommended by Finance Committee)

002559 **RESOLVED** to adopt the revised Child & Vulnerable Person Protection Policy.

15. OUTSIDE BODIES

15.1 Note minutes from the Blackham Village Hall AGM – noted, Councillors were pleased to see the meeting so well attended and the Hall doing well.

15.2 Consider a Councillor representative for Groombridge Scouts

Following Cllr Winter's and Cllr Anderson's attendance at the Groombridge Scouts awards evening, Council AGREED that it would be beneficial to build stronger links. Cllrs Winter and Parekh-Jones would contact the Scout Leader to explore this.

16. CLERK'S REPORT – to include confirmation of date for Business Planning session

Councillors were asked to diarise the Business Planning (Visioning) session on Saturday 25th November at 9.30am at Groombridge Village Hall. David Carden would facilitate.

17. REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS REGARDING MEETINGS AND TRAINING ATTENDED

Cllr Lawne had attended the Wealden District Association of Local Councils meeting. The main item had been water supply issues and a representative from South East Water was invited to attend. At the time of the meeting WDC representatives felt that planning permission could not be refused for water supply concerns, however Cllr Hulbert's report (item 6) was contrary to that. WDC had also confirmed that work on the Local Plan would be prioritised.

Cllr Gordon-James and Lawne had attended Finance training on Zoom.

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

- 'Dogs on Leads' policy at Groombridge Recreation Ground
- Marden's Hill road safety
- Solar powered speed devices
- Feedback from the new Climate and Ecology Advisory Committee
- Response to ESCC wild verge consultation

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Monday 9th October 2023 at Groombridge Old Station at 7pm unless otherwise notified by the agenda

The meeting ended at 8.30pm.