

Minutes of the **WITHYHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING** held at **THE OLD STATION, GROOMBRIDGE**
on **8th July 2024** at 7pm

PRESENT Cllrs Nick Anderson, Emma Bowers, Andrew Fane, Alan Gaukroger, Robert Gordon-James, Diana Kelly (Chair), Penny Lawne, Jill Pardey, Deviani Parekh-Jones, Beth Rhodes Sue Skinner, Judi Tuke, Linsey Winter

In attendance: Deborah Siddle - Clerk (minutes)
District Cllr Jessika Hulbert (to item 12)
County Cllr Georgia Taylor (to item 12)

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 – none.

2. APOLOGIES – none

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Cllrs Gordon James and Judi Tuke for item 14.

4. MINUTES

4.1. Resolve that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday 10th June 2024 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

002743 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2024 were approved, with the amendment that Cllr Pardey was not present.

4.2. Matters outstanding from minutes (not listed as separate agenda items)
Cllr Kelly explained that to support staff workloads, the table of actions would include a deadline for Councillors to complete actions. If the deadline passes Council would agree if the action is still relevant and if so, who should do it.

Matters resolved from previous minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item
002623	Clerk	Application for bank account with Unity Trust Bank in progress
Pg. 2959	Cllrs Tuke and Winter	WPC noticeboards being updated
Pg.2977	Clerks	Sussex Lund grant opportunity circulated on Facebook and email

WPC/8.7.2024 003010

Pg.297	Clerk	Information on "One You East Sussex" free NHS Health Checks sent to Cllr Pardey
Pg.2978	Cllr Gordon-James	Evidence of ownership of the verge opposite the Parish Office sent to Clerks. Clerks are in touch with ESH and residents have been encouraged to make regular reports about overgrown verge
Pg.2978	Assistant Clerk/ Highways Coord	Obscured sight lines at verge opposite the Parish Office reported to ES Highways
Pg.2978	Assistant Clerk/ Highways Coord	Reported to ESH that the playground warning road sign is obscured by foliage
Pg.2978	Assistant Clerk/ Highways Coord	Reported to ES Highways that the grass at Ladies Mile junction is obscuring sight lines
Pg.2978	Clerk	Request for WPC to attend Withyham Fete declined
Pg.2978	Cllr Skinner	Events at Kings' Hall provided to Clerk in case appropriate for WPC to attend
Pg.2978	Clerk	Enquiry made as to whether the Conservators might have somewhere available for bike jumps. Response awaited.
Pg.2978	Assistant Clerk	Crowborough Town Council confirmed the yellow gates at Forest Fold burial ground are to be painted
Pg.2979	Assistant Clerk	ES Highways notified of concerns about dead trees near Lye Green junction
Pg.2979	Clerks	Issues around timescales for streetlighting works on agenda for meeting with new ESCC Head of Service
002702	Clerk	Adopted the Councillor Code of Conduct
002703	Clerk	Adopted the Document Retention and Destructions Policy with amendments.
002705/6	Cllr Gordon-James	Instructed ADN roofing for works at Phoenix House
002707	Clerk	Instructed ADN roofing for works at Groombridge Old Station
002708	Chair/Clerk	Approved the Annual Return Governance Statement
002709	Chair/Clerk	Approved the Accounting Statements (end of year accounts to 31 st March 2024)
Pg.2983	Clerk	Publicised the Notice of Electors' Rights

Actions outstanding from previous minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item
Pg. 2975	Clerk	Update Cllr Hulbert if and when WPC chooses to progress Youth Forum
Pg. 2977	Community Engagement Coord	Undertake a recruitment campaign for additional non-councillors to CEAG

Actions from these Minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item	Deadline
	Assistant Clerk	Help publicise ESCC's campaign to recruit foster carers	
	Assistant Clerk	Design and purchase a banner to go on the Post Office railings to dissuade parking on the lines (with consent from CIC)	
	Cllr Rhodes	Include concerns about parking on the lines at the Post office in the next Parish notes and encourage use of Operation Crackdown	September
	Assistant Clerk	Encourage residents to make reports about antisocial parking on Operation Crackdown	
	Cllrs Kelly & Bowers	Meet with the parent (and children if they wish to do so) to about the ramp on the Reading Room land	September
	Clerk	Parish Maintenance Person to remove the ramp on the Reading Room when meeting with parent has taken place	
	Clerk	Subscribe to both GACC and CAGNE	
	Community Engagement Coordinator	Send Glyphosate letter	
	Clerk	Provide Glyphosate letter to Cllrs Taylor and Hulbert	
	Clerk	Make a new application to list Groombridge Recreation Ground an Asset of Community Value	
	Clerk	Adopt the Policy on use of WPC land 'Events policy and Procedures' with the agreed update	
	Clerk	Adopt the revised Financial Regulations	
	Clerk	Notify CIC on decision about maintenance and insurance contributions	
	Clerk	Pay invoices in August in agreement with the Chair and Vice Chair	
	Councillors	Seek another Councillor to cover the community café if they are unable to do their allocated date	September
	Clerk	Future agendas to include Meetings' calendar, Conservators' response to St John's bike jumps and Parish Plan 2024-28 leaflet	

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 June 2024 – noted

5.2 Planning Committee – 25th June 2024 – noted

5.3 Finance Committee – 25th June 2024 – noted. The Chair of the Committee outlined the Grants agreed at the meeting and confirmed that there is £1,140 remaining in budget for applications in 2024/25.

6. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT and COUNTY COUNCILLORS

County Cllr Taylor updated the meeting on the following:

- ESCC has a Full Council meeting on 9th June where the 'State of the County' report and forward planning is being considered. There is a significant deficit for 2025/26 (between £26.6m and £40m) and uncertainty about local government funding going forwards. This year the deficit will be covered by using reserves, but this is not sustainable so the council is looking to make some savings to some services.
- The ESCC target for reducing emissions has not been met for the last two years despite projects such as solar power generation installations, building insulation in schools and rationalisation of public buildings. ESCC councillors await a climate adaptation plan.
- The political balance of the council has changed slightly and there is no longer a full majority.
- There is a big push to recruit foster carers and Cllr Taylor asked WPC to help publicise it.

District Cllr Hulbert updated the meeting that she has been working to support residents with their issues, including around concerns raised at the May meeting about Ashurst and Blackham Sports Ground. The political balance at WDC has also changed slightly.

7. WARD REPORTS

7a) Groombridge Ward (Groombridge)

Cllr Anderson reported that Groombridge Cricket Club were pleased to receive a grant from WPC and were in the process of buying the mower.

Cllr Winter commented on how people are using the seating area outside Groombridge Village Hall more and residents had said to her how nice it looks. The partnership between Groombridge Village Hall and the Horticultural Society was complimented.

Concerns had been raised about cars parking on the yellow lines outside Groombridge Post Office, and how dangerous this is for pedestrians and other vehicles. The Clerks had asked the PCSO to attend and suggested a banner is designed and purchased to go on the railings, which was agreed (pending consent from the CIC). Cllr Rhodes was asked to include this in the next Parish notes. Residents should be encouraged to make reports on Operation Crackdown.

7b) Groombridge Ward (Withyham/Blackham)

The Blackham 'Blackham Events: Together for Social Inclusion' (BETSI) had received a WPC grant and would be purchasing a barbeque. Future event plans include fireworks.

A letter had been received from a resident complaining about the Teasley Mead swing. It was noted that they had complained before. Councillors recognised that it could be a big change for some people and a response would be sent.

Blackham market continues to be well attended at Blackham Village Hall, and the recent Quiz Night was also popular.

Cllr Kelly updated Councillors on the letter that had been sent asking if WPC could have a presence at Withyham Fete, and the response that had been received declining the request. Councillors felt that it would have been an ideal way to engage with Withyham residents and it was a shame that they would continue to miss out. Cllr Skinner had provided the Clerk with some events at Kings' Hall but it was noted that these would not receive the cross section of parishioners that the fete would.

Cllr Kelly would like to extend an invitation to Countess De La Warr for tea at the Parish Office.

7c) Marden's Hill Ward

Cllr Pardey was pleased to see the Speed Indicator Device sited at London Road for a few weeks.

Recent patching works near Kings Standing were reported to be disappointing. County Cllr Taylor said that she would look at that.

8. CONSIDER MARDENS HILL/READING ROOM CYCLE JUMPS

Councillors had received a report prior to the meeting updating them on a letter received from a parent of a child who had built ramps, the enquiry sent by the Clerk to the Ashdown Forest Conservators' and the response received from WPC's insurers.

Councillors thanked the parent for their very good email and noted with regret that WPC may be held responsible for injuries to the users or other people slipping/tripping on any jumps/ramps constructed by children or other people as it would be considered our 'negligence' should we leave them there. Only professionally installed ramps would be insurable.

The following was agreed:

- Cllrs Kelly and Bowers to meet with the parent (and children if they wish to do so) to explain why the ramp on the Reading Room land will be removed and find out if the children would wish to see professionally installed ramps if land could be agreed with the Ashdown Forest Conservators and the children could support fundraising
- The Parish Maintenance Person to remove the ramp on the Reading Room after the conversation with the parent/children

- The Conservators' response to be brought to Council when received

9. GATWICK FLIGHT PATH – consider recommendation for memberships to campaign groups

A paper had been circulated prior to the meeting written by Cllr Gaukroger recommending that WPC joins the groups Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC) and Communities Against Gatwick Noise and Emissions (CAGNE).

Councillors agreed that concerns over air traffic noise, flight paths and changes to the runways at Gatwick are an issue for many residents and that WPC needs to be in the loop.

002744 RESOLVED that WPC subscribes to both GACC and CAGNE and makes a donation of £10 to both.

It was confirmed that the Assistant Clerk would be the point of dissemination and that Cllrs Anderson, Gaukroger, Lawne and Tuke would be happy to support her and attend meetings organised by GACC and CAGNE as necessary.

10. USE OF GLYPHOSATE – consider letter to ESCC

A paper had been circulated prior to the meeting explaining the Climate and Ecology Advisory Group's concerns around the use of Glyphosate by East Sussex Highways to control weeds and recommending a letter written by Cllr Anderson outlining concerns, alternatives and case studies to be sent by WPC.

002745 RESOLVED to send to the letter to ESCC.

Cllr Anderson thanked the Community Engagement Coordinator for writing the paper and for her help writing the letter.

County Cllr Taylor and District Cllr Hulbert asked to receive copies of the letter.

11. CONSIDER APPLICATION FOR GROOMBRIDGE RECREATION GROUND TO REMAIN AN ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE

WPC had previously been successful in its application to make Groombridge Recreation Ground an Asset of Community Value. Now that 5 years had passed it had been removed from the list and WPC was invited to make a new application.

002746 RESOLVED to make a new application to Wealden District Council to list Groombridge Recreation Ground an Asset of Community Value.

12. PARISH PLAN 2024-28 - update

Following reviews and a workshop with staff and councillors and the Annual Parish Assembly where draft priorities were shared, work had been undertaken on the format for the new Parish Plan 2024-2028. This would be proof-read and brought to September Committee to sign off.

County Cllr Taylor and District Cllr Hulbert left the meeting.

13. AGREE POLICIES:**13.1 Policy on the use of WPC land for business and private use (new)**

002747 Councillors agreed that inflatables should be allowed within certain parameters. They supported that balloons/lanterns should not be allowable. **RESOLVED** to adopt the Policy on use of WPC land 'Events policy and Procedures' with the agreed update.

13.2 Financial Regulations 2024 (recommended by Finance Committee)

002748 **RESOLVED** to adopt the Financial Regulations.

14. WPCIC LEASE – agree Finance Committee recommendations for insurance and maintenance contributions

The last Building Assets Working Group, where the Phoenix House roof repairs were discussed, queried whether WPCIC would be obligated to contribute to the repairs under their lease for the Post Office part of the building.

Subsequently Finance Committee reviewed the lease terms and made recommendations to Council which were agreed:

002749 **RESOLVED** that WPC would not charge WPCIC for a contribution to maintenance and insurance in 2024/25; in effect this is subsidy in kind.

002750 **RESOLVED** that at budget setting each year WPC will review its position for the following year at the same time as considering the annual level of subsidy to WPCIC.

15. FINANCE**15.1 Note the report showing payments made to date against budgets – noted.****15.2 Authorise the payment of July invoices/note regular payments**

Time:12:08

Cashbook 1

User: DS

Current Bank A/c (HSBC)

Payments made between 27/06/2024 and 09/07/2024

			Nominal Ledger Analysis						
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
27/06/2024	Everflow	DEFOS0624	22.46			4502	101	22.46	water charges Old Station
09/07/2024	Omni Waste Management	BACS60	87.72		14.62	4506	101	73.10	Office bins May
09/07/2024	Viking Direct	BACS61	120.57		20.09	4015	101	100.48	Stationery
09/07/2024	Mulberry and Co.	BACS62	108.00		18.00	4007	101	90.00	Cllr training
09/07/2024	Quaife Woodlands	BACS63	1,140.00		190.00	4230	201	950.00	Tree surveys
09/07/2024	Wealden District Council	BACS64	943.80		157.30	4213	201	500.50	Dog bins Apr-Jun
						4211	201	286.00	Litter bins Apr-Jun
09/07/2024	Society - Local Council Clerks	BACS65	150.00		25.00	4007	101	125.00	3 x staff training
09/07/2024	ADN Roofing	BACS66	3,352.99		558.83	5200	500	2,794.16	Scaffold & 35% dep Ph Hse Roof
09/07/2024	CSS Ltd	BACS67	144.00		24.00	4015	101	120.00	Key fobs (office alarm)
09/07/2024	N.Wealden Community Transport	BACS68	157.00			4401	401	157.00	Wealdlink subsidy Jul-Sep
09/07/2024	St Thomas' Church, Groombridge	BACS69	1,150.00			4101	102	1,150.00	Grant-maintenance burial groun
09/07/2024	Groombridge Cricket Club	BACS70	720.00			4101	102	720.00	Grant - rotary mower
09/07/2024	Groombridge Guides	BACS71	1,740.00			4101	102	1,740.00	Grant-drainage works Guide Hu
09/07/2024	Store4Biz Ltd (S4B)	BACS72	86.40		14.40	4506	101	72.00	Confidential shredding
09/07/2024	Groombridge Village Hall	BACS73	35.56			4064	101	35.56	C Cafe hire (Jun)

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09/07/2024	R Bailey	BACS74	40.00		4503	101	40.00	Window cleaning
09/07/2024	SME IT Solutions	BACS75	511.64	85.27	4013	101	105.18	Phone&Bband
					4021	101	321.19	IT support/Phone&Bba
09/07/2024	WPCIC	BACS76	1,000.00		5001	500	1,000.00	Post Office subsidy Jul
09/07/2024	Natalie Brett	BACS77	30.00	5.00	4407	401	25.00	Materials Withyham Bus Shelter
09/07/2024	N Brett	BACS77	5.80		4510	101	5.80	Milk (parish office)
09/07/2024	B Aggutter	BACS78	4.95		4421	401	4.95	Highways Coord mileage Jun
09/07/2024	Various	BACS79	4,752.44		4003	101	364.00	Salaries Jul
					4000	101	4,388.44	Salaries Jul
09/07/2024	O Chenchyk	BACS80	27.00		4407	401	27.00	PMP Mileage Jun
09/07/2024	Prepaid card	CB1PPC Jul	250.46		203		250.46	Prepaid card expenditure
09/07/2024	Everflow	DDEFPO0724	42.42		5101	500	42.42	Post Office water charges
09/07/2024	NEST Pensions	DDNEST0724	477.05		4001	101	477.05	Pensions
09/07/2024	HSBC	HSBC0724	8.00		4600	101	8.00	Charges May-Jun

002751 **RESOLVED** to pay the July invoices listed above totalling £18,441.59; to pay by BACS or sign the cheques accordingly.

15.3 Delegate authority to the Clerk to pay invoices in August in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, and to report to September Council

As there will be no August Council meeting this was agreed, and the list should be reported to September Council.

002752 **RESOLVED** that the Clerk should pay invoices in August in agreement with the Chair and Vice Chair.

15.4 Consider any quotes – there were no quotes

16. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk highlighted the rota for Councillors to attend Community Cafes which had been emailed on 4th July. It was confirmed that Cllr Pardey and Lawne would swap their dates and that Cllr Winter would do the October café.

Councillors were asked to seek another councillor to cover for them if they are unable to do their allocated café. They should also collect the A-board from the parish office during the week prior to their café.

17. REPORTS FROM MEETINGS AND TRAINING ATTENDED BY COUNCILLORS

Cllr Skinner would be attending the Blackham Village Hall AGM for WPC.

Cllr Skinner had attended new councillor training on Zoom and found it to be clear and concise. Cllr Bowers would be attending in the autumn.

It was noted that members of Planning Committee would require training as the new Government introduces changes to the Planning system.

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

- Meetings' Calendar
- St John's bike jumps – Ashdown Forest Conservators' response
- Parish Plan flier

It was AGREED that, as the resident had not been in touch, Marden's Hill road safety would be removed until further contact is received.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Monday 9th September 2024 at Groombridge Old Station at 7pm unless otherwise notified by the agenda

The meeting ended at 8.20pm.