

Minutes of the **WITHYHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING** held at **THE OLD STATION, GROOMBRIDGE** on **8th September 2025** at 7pm

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

In attendance: Natalie Brett – Assistant Clerk (minutes)
Kelly Gaynor – Clerk (observe)
County Cllr Georgia Taylor

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 in attendance.

Before the meeting opened, Cllr Kelly made a statement on the passing of David Homewood.

David was a long-standing and active member of the community. He inspired many initiatives and played a key role in developing activities and facilities that continue to benefit residents today. He was thoughtful, kind, and consistently supportive of the Parish Council. The Council recognises his significant contribution to the community and notes that he will be greatly missed. Councillors extend their condolences to his family and friends.

1. **ENQUIRE WHETHER ANYONE PRESENT INTENDS TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH AND/OR RECORD THE MEETING** – none.

2. **APOLOGIES** – Cllr Beth Rhodes – Work Commitment
District Cllr Jessika Hulbert

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – None

4. **MINUTES**

4.1. Resolve that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday 7th July 2025 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

003043 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th July 2025 were approved.

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

Minute no.	Who	Item	Deadline by which to complete	Update
Pg 3202	Cllrs Bowers & Gaukroger	Arrange to meet with resident regarding issues in Blackham	July	Completed
Pg.3222	Clerk	Update St Thomas' School about FP34	August	Done (8 th July)
2998	Clerk	Adopt the Financial Regulations	August	Done
2999	Clerk	Adopt the Scheme of Delegation	August	Done
3000	Clerk	Adopt the Standing Orders	August	Done
3001	Clerk	Adopt the health and Safety policy	August	Done
3003	RFO	Pay invoices in August in agreement with the Chair and Vice Chair	August	Done – see agenda item to note payments
3004	RFO	Transfer funds currently in Nationwide 95 day access account to a higher interest account	August	Done
3005	Clerk	Dispose of WPC gazebos that are broken and with missing parts	August	Done
3006	Clerk	Agree the quote for replacement of streetlight Column 27 at the Victoria bus stop	August	Done (9 th July)
Pg.3226	Clerk	Instruct our streetlighting contractor to return the ornamental lantern from Column 27	August	Done (9 th July)
Pg.3226	Cllr Gaukroger	Join Finance and Staff Committees	August	Done
3009	Council	Appoint the Assistant Clerk as Temporary Proper Officer with clearly limited duties from 1 August	August	Done
Pg.3226	Assistant Clerk	Review arrangement for Proper Officer at September Council meeting	September	Clerk appointed
3010	Assistant Clerk	Public communications to manage resident expectations during staff changes	August	Done
Pg.3226	Assistant Clerk	Close the office when the Assistant Clerk is on annual leave	August	Not necessary - Clerk appointed

Actions from previous Minutes

Minute no.	Who	Item	Deadline by which to complete	Update
Pg 3207	Cllrs Winter & Anderson	Help promote Speedwatch on social media and to the Groombridge WI group	July	On going
2997	Clerk	Should legal advice permit the installation of a fence at Groombridge Play area, the Parish Council conduct its own consultation process	Tbc – when new Clerk in post	On agenda for this meeting
Pg.3100	Finance Committee	Consider Members Allowances at updated levels, travel and subsistence rates and costs for child/dependants' care in 2026/27 budget setting	Autumn	
Pg 3180	Cllr Gordon-James	Become link councillor with WPCIC rather than a Director after a replacement Director is identified	TBC – after recruitment of a Director	Will be completed by next meeting.
Pg 3185	Clerk	Defer Withyham/Blackham Ward Chair until Cllrs Bowers and Skinner return to meetings	July	
Pg 3202	Cllr Anderson	Monitor GCC/recreation ground vehicle gate and let Council know if more could be done	July	
2971	Clerk/RFO	WPC will not fund an extra 4 urban verge grass cuts in 2026	Autumn	Will notify ESCC when they email re the matter in Autumn 2025

Actions from these Minutes

Minute no	Who	Item	Deadline by which to complete
Pg 3246	Clerks	Share details of the Ward Scheme to grant applicants and on social media	October
Pg 3246	Cllr Anderson	Share details of Ward Scheme to Cricket Club and advise that the repair of the fence is their responsibility under their lease	October
Pg 3246	Clerks	Add CEAG and Wild Verge update to the next Council meeting agenda	October Council
Pg 3246	Cllr Parekh-Jones	Update council on progress of the Ridge Association when available	
Pg 3246	PMP	Trim bushes by Dog bin in Blackham	October
Pg 3247	Clerks	Add boundary of Blackham bus shelter to pend list	October
Pg 3247	Clerks	Share contact details for East Sussex Highways reporting	October
3044	Clerks	Conduct a consultation on fencing the playground in Groombridge in the spring	
3045	Clerks	Accept the quote from Playdale for the accessible roundabout	October
3047	HC/ Ass Clerk	To provide a written statement on fatal crash for agreement by Clerk/Chairman. To then be sent to solicitor.	October
3048	Clerks	Adopt the Vexatious Complaints Policy	

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 Minutes 7.7.25 - Noted
- 5.2 Planning Committee Minutes 21.7.25 - Noted
- 5.3 Planning Committee Minutes 4.8.25- Noted
- 5.4 Planning Committee Minutes 18.8.25- Noted
- 5.5 Staff and Administration Minutes 4.8.25- Noted

6. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT and COUNTY COUNCILLORS

County Cllr Georgia Taylor updated Councillors on the following matters:

- Cherry Gardens Hill bus service – Ongoing issues continue. Residents contacting the Parish Council should be referred to Cllr Taylor.
- No. 51 bus – This service is facing a reduction in operating times. Cllr Taylor, along with neighbouring parishes, has lodged objections. Although the route does not run directly through the parish, it remains an important service for some residents.

- Devolution / Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) – Devolution is now referred to as the MSA. Relevant legislation and a white paper are progressing through Parliament. Elections for a Mayor and Deputy Mayors are scheduled for May 2026. East Sussex County Council has asked Government to delay these until new voting arrangements, expected in 2027, are in place.
- Unitary Authority proposals – Proposals on the structure of the new unitary authority are due by the end of March. Several options are expected, including one from East Sussex County Council. Central Government will decide which to implement. The process is anticipated to be costly, with no short-term savings, and redundancies are likely. Cllr Taylor will be pressing for a dedicated group within the authority to focus on northern Wealden and Rother, to ensure those areas are not overlooked.

Cllr Hulbert provided information prior to the meeting on a ward budget scheme open to non-profit, voluntary and community organisations. ***The Clerk was asked to circulate details to Withyham Parish Council grant applicants and to publicise the scheme on social media.***

7. WARD REPORTS

7a) Groombridge Ward (Groombridge)

Cllr Andrew Fane – Cllr Fane, a valued member of the Parish Council, has resigned on health grounds. The Parish Council thanks him for his hard work over the years. Upon receipt of his resignation letter, the Chairman presented him with a small gift. Wealden District Council has been notified of the vacancy.

Cricket ground fencing, Groombridge – Responsibility for the fencing lies with the Cricket Club under the terms of their lease. Several holes in the fence were reported, and it was noted that residents had raised concerns with members. ***Cllr Anderson will pass on details of the Ward Budget scheme to the Club.***

Updates requested – ***It was agreed that updates from CEAG and on the wild verge project will be brought to the next Council meeting.***

The Ridge community association – The Ridge is in the process of setting up a community association, which was welcomed as a positive development. ***Cllr Parekh-Jones will keep the Council updated on progress.***

Parking and driving concerns, Corselely Road – Issues of parking and unsafe driving were noted. Whilst the Parish Council has no powers to address this directly, residents and Councillors are encouraged to report incidents to Police 101 and Operation Crackdown.

7b) Groombridge Ward (Withyham/Blackham)

Blackham resident meeting – Cllrs Bowers and Gaukroger attended a meeting with a resident in Blackham. Notes of the meeting were circulated. It was noted that the hedge in Blackham is budgeted for one cut per year, which has already been carried out. The broken manhole cover will be reported to BT as it is their responsibility. ***The Parish Maintenance Person (PMP) will be requested to trim the hedge by the dog waste bin.***

Blackham Events: Together for Social Inclusion (BETSI) – A request regarding the boundary of the bus shelter adopted by BETSI from Withyham Parish Council was received. ***This item will be added to the pending list for action when possible. BETSI*** was reported to have a full and active committee with many events planned.

7c) Marden's Hill Ward

Resident issues raised with Cllr Pardey – Residents raised concerns about the quality of pavements, overgrown vegetation on the road, and potholes. Councillors were reminded that these matters fall under the remit of East Sussex Highways, and that both residents and councillors can report issues directly. ***The Clerk will circulate East Sussex Highways' reporting contact details following the meeting.***

It was noted that the East Sussex County Council Rights of Way team and Wealden District Council's Street Scene officer had recently resolved two outstanding issues efficiently and in a timely manner.

8. AGREE NEXT STEPS ON PROPOSAL FOR FENCING THE PLAYGROUND AT GROOMBRIDGE RECREATION GROUND

This item followed on from the previous meeting. A paper had been circulated prior to the meeting with the update on legal advice and recommendations.

003044 ***RESOLVED that Withyham Parish Council will conduct a Consultation on fencing the Playground at Groombridge in Spring 2026.***

9. PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT - REPAIRS

9.1 Decision on repair of broken roundabout at Groombridge recreation ground

It was noted that for this piece of equipment which has failed, is just over two years old and this was not acceptable. However, the work done by the Clerk to reduce to cost to repair had taken this into account. It was noted that this was the only piece of accessible equipment in the playground and that residents had registered their disappointment in it not working.

003045 ***RESOLVED to accept the quote from Playdale to replace the bearing on condition that the PMP is trained on its future maintenance and the equipment is left fully balanced and working.***

10. REVIEW REQUEST FOR HIGHWAY COORDINATOR STATEMENT – B2188 FATAL COLLISION

Councillors were reminded of the confidentiality of this item as it involves a third party legal claim and sensitive personal information.

The Chairman made a short resolution under **s.1 (2) of the 1960 Act** to exclude the press and public for this item only.

003046 ***RESOLVED to exclude the press and the public for this item only.***

East Sussex County Council Cllr Taylor left the meeting

003047 ***RESOLVED to authorise the Highways Coordinator to write a statement for approval by the Clerk and Chairman to then be sent to Russel Cooke Solicitors.***

11. TO ADOPT THE VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS POLICY

003048 ***RESOLVED to adopt the vexatious complains policy.***

12. FINANCE

12.1 Note the report showing payments made to date against budgets – Noted

12.2 Note payments made since July Council meeting (delegated authority) - Noted

Date: 05/08/2025		Withyham Parish Council						Page 1	
Time: 15:25		Cashbook 1						User: DS	
		Current Bank A/c (HSBC)							
		Payments made between 05/08/2025 and 12/08/2025							
Nominal Ledger Analysis									
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c	Centre	£ Amount	Transaction Details
12/08/2025	Society - Local Council Clerks	BACS79	341.60		33.20	4040	101	186.00	Recruitment (minus overpayment
						4015	101	142.40	Arnold Baker book 13th ed
12/08/2025	PKF Littlejohn	BACS80	756.00		126.00	4040	101	630.00	External audit 24/25
12/08/2025	CSS Ltd	BACS81	60.00		10.00	4503	101	50.00	Alarm fob
12/08/2025	Commercial Services Trading Lt	BACS82	2,279.15		379.86	4205	201	1,000.00	Grass cuts Apr-Jun
						4206	201	500.00	Grass cuts Apr-Jun
						4260	203	200.00	Grass cuts Apr-Jun
						4261	203	199.29	Grass cuts Apr-Jun
12/08/2025	Sevenoaks Firewood Ltd	BACS83	336.00		56.00	5200	500	280.00	Hedge cutting Phoenix Hse
12/08/2025	Society - Local Council Clerks	BACS84	190.00			4008	101	190.00	membership - RFO
12/08/2025	R Bailey	BACS85	40.00			4503	101	40.00	Windowcleaning
12/08/2025	Managed Technology	BACS86	406.81		67.80	4017	101	339.01	Copier Apr-Jul
12/08/2025	ROSPA	BACS87	192.00		32.00	4270	203	160.00	inspections BG & TM
12/08/2025	Viking Direct	BACS88	432.13		72.02	4015	101	360.11	Stationery & filing cabinet
12/08/2025	SME IT Solutions	BACS89	555.06		92.51	4018	101	9.99	Website
						4021	101	347.48	IT support
						4013	101	105.08	phone, Bband
12/08/2025	Omni Waste Management	BACS90	38.37		6.40	4506	101	31.97	Office bins June
12/08/2025	Groombridge Village Hall	BACS91	37.38			4064	101	37.38	Com Cafe Jul
12/08/2025	Volunteer	BACS92	5.85			4421	401	5.85	Mileage
12/08/2025	Employee	BACS93	34.99			4015	101	34.99	Shelf for office
12/08/2025	Employee	BACS94	55.50			4016	101	25.00	Eye test
						4420	401	17.90	Paint fingerposts
						4009	101	12.60	Mileage Finance conference
12/08/2025	Various	BACS95	4,733.72			4003	101	379.17	PMP
						4005	101	277.34	overtime
						4000	101	4,077.21	Salaries
12/08/2025	Prepaid card	CB1PPC0825	235.04			203		235.04	CB1 to PPcard Aug
12/08/2025	British Gas Lite	DDBG0825	94.76			5101	500	94.76	Post Office/Ph Hse elec
12/08/2025	NEST pensions	DDNEST0825	485.46			4001	101	485.46	pension contributions
12/08/2025	Octopus	DDOCT0825	75.23			4502	101	75.23	Office elec & gas
12/08/2025	Everflow	EFOS0825	27.52			4502	101	27.52	Office water
12/08/2025	Everflow	EFPO0825	78.70			5101	500	78.70	Post office/Ph Hse water
12/08/2025	The Premier Trust N A Houghton	SONH0825	666.67			4012	101	666.67	Rent Aug
12/08/2025	The Premier Trust T J Newman	SOTN0825	666.66			4012	101	666.66	Rent Aug
Subtotal Carried Forward:			12,824.60	0.00	875.79			11,948.81	

12.3 Authorise the payment of September invoices/note regular payments

Time: 12:38

Cashbook 1

User: DS

Current Bank A/c (HSBC)

Payments made between 15/08/2025 and 09/09/2025

Nominal Ledger Analysis							
Date	Payee Name	Reference	£ Total Amnt	£ Creditors	£ VAT	A/c - Contra	£ Amount Transaction Details
12/08/2025	Employee	BACS95	1,007.41			4000 101	1,007.41 Aug salary
15/08/2025	Society - Local Council Clerks	BACS96	144.00		24.00	4007 101	120.00 ILCA fee
15/08/2025	HSBC	HSBC0825	8.00			4600 101	8.00 bank interest
15/08/2025	Society - Local Council Clerks	MACS97	315.00			4008 101	315.00 Subs SLCC (Clerk)
09/09/2025	OmniWaste Management	BACS100	38.49		6.42	4506 101	32.07 Office waste July
09/09/2025	Mulberry Local Authority Servi	BACS101	240.00		40.00	4007 101	200.00 Training
09/09/2025	DM Payroll Services Ltd	BACS102	144.00		24.00	4040 101	120.00 Payroll admin Apr-Sep
09/09/2025	Viking Direct	BACS103	154.29		25.72	4501 101	54.93 fene
						4015 101	73.64 stationery
09/09/2025	National Association of Local	BACS104	42.00		7.00	4007 101	35.00 Training - Green Growth
09/09/2025	Society - Local Council Clerks	BACS105	510.00		85.00	4007 101	425.00 Training
09/09/2025	Volunteer	BACS106	4.95			4421 401	4.95 Highways Coord mileage
09/09/2025	Various	BACS107	5,439.42			4003 101	379.17 Salaries Sep25
						4000 101	5,060.25 Salaries Sep25
09/09/2025	Various	BACS108	454.10			4011 101	454.10 Members Allowances (half yr)
09/09/2025	Chairperson	BACS109	1,300.00			4010 101	1,300.00 Chairman's allowance 2025/26
09/09/2025	HMRC	BACS110	3,997.23			4001 101	3,997.23 Tax & NI Qtr2
09/09/2025	Employee	BACS111	12.80			4510 101	12.80 Milk (July & Aug)
09/09/2025	R Bailey	BACS98	40.00			4503 101	40.00 Window cleaning
09/09/2025	SME IT Solutions	BACS99	1,543.96		257.33	4013 101	123.18 phones & broadband
						4018 101	9.99 Website hosting
						4021 101	346.48 ITsupport
						4016 101	808.98 New PC & upgrades
09/09/2025	Employee	BASC112	26.19			4407 401	26.19 Mileage (July) PMP
09/09/2025	Prepaid card	CB1 PPC 09	138.87			203	138.87 CB1 to PPcard Sep
09/09/2025	British Gas	DBG0925	95.88			5101 500	95.88 Electricity PO/Ph Hse
09/09/2025	Everflow	DDEFOS0925	28.01			4502 101	28.01 Water Old Station
09/09/2025	Everflow	DDEFPO0925	71.84			5101 500	71.84 Water PO/Ph Hse
09/09/2025	Various	DDNEST0925	780.14			4001 101	780.14 Pensions Sep
09/09/2025	The Premier Trust N A Houghton	SONH0925	666.67			4012 101	666.67 Rent Sep
09/09/2025	The Premier Trust T J Newman	SOTN0925	666.66			4012 101	666.66 Rent Sep
			£17,869.71				

003049 RESOLVED to pay the September invoices listed above totalling £17,869.71+ VAT; to pay by BACS or sign the cheques accordingly.

12.4 Receive the external Audit report (2024/25)

This had been circulated prior to the meeting and was noted. The Responsible Finance Officer was thanked for their excellent work and another positive Audit report.

12.5 Note the availability of the bank reconciliations file for inspection

The bank reconciliation file was presented to councillors for inspection.

12.6 Note the implementation of the Local government services pay agreement 2025/26 - This was noted

12.7 Consider any quotes - None**13. STAFFING MATTERS**13.1 Note the appointment of The Clerk

Cllr Gordon-James advised that the responsibility of the role of Clerk and Proper Officer was now fulfilled by Withyham Parish Council new Clerk Kelly Gaynor. She was welcomed by Councillors. A comprehensive induction and training process was underway, which included a tour of the parish with the chairman. The Assistant Clerk would return to her previous duties in addition to supporting the induction of the new clerk. The Assistant Clerk was thanked for stepping in during the vacancy. Cllr Pardey commended the Staff Committee on the speed in which they employed a new Clerk, noting that she appears to be a very good fit for the role.

13.2 Note the Pend List

The pend list was noted. Councillors were reminded that there continues to be an interim period where full capacity is not yet available and workloads must be managed in accordance with this.

14. CLERK'S REPORT

Wealden District Council would be conducting their annual canvas of the electoral role and had also started the postal vote renewal process.

The Parish Office was currently accepting documents from councillors that needed to be confidentially shredded. These should only be Council documents. The deadline would be the date of the next meeting.

15. REPORTS FROM MEETINGS AND TRAINING ATTENDED BY COUNCILLORS

Cllr Gordon-James had attended training on charring meetings and shared his meeting notes. Other councillors were encouraged to attend training.

Cllr Anderson requested a place on the next meeting charring training

Cllr Gordon-James had attended a Wealdlink meeting and advised Councillors that Wealdlink had now signed up to the Wealden District Council Community Lottery. Wealdlink are also looking for more volunteer drivers and trustees.

Cllr Winter would be attending the Groombridge Village Hall meeting as the Withyham Parish Council Representative. Councillors should contact Cllr Winter by email should they wish to have anything raised.

Cllrs Lawne and Parekh-Jones would shortly be attending finance training.

16. MATTERS OF URGENT IMPORTANCE FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDA:- None**17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Monday 13th October 2025 at Groombridge Old Station at 7pm unless otherwise notified by the agenda**

The meeting ended at 8.18pm.