

WEST DEAN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday 8 November 2023 at 7.30pm

West Dean College

	ACTION
<p>Present: Cllr Steve Corbett, Cllr Helen Court, Cllr John Flemming, Cllr Amy Green, Cllr William De Groot, Cllr Keith Goacher, Cllr Ian Graham and Cllr Cathy Slade.</p> <p>In attendance: Clare Kennett, Clerk to the Parish Council.</p> <p>The meeting was chaired by Cllr Corbett. No members of the public or press were present.</p> <p>Agenda item 1. Apologies for absence: There were no apologies from members of the Parish Council. Cllr Jeremy Hunt, West Sussex County Council, sent his apologies.</p> <p>Agenda Item 2. Code of Conduct: There were no declarations of interests or requests for dispensations.</p> <p>Agenda item 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2023: Members AGREED to APPROVE the minutes as a true record and they were signed as such by the Chairman.</p> <p>Agenda item 4. Update on matters carried forward from previous meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Selsey Arms resubmission update: Cllr Goacher had circulated the supporting information for the application form to register the pub as an asset of community value before the meeting. Members AGREED that Cllr Goacher could include the information in the application form to be submitted to Chichester District Council.Operation Watershed: It was NOTED that the Clerk had received an email from Landbuild to say that the works had been completed at Chilgrove Road. Members discussed that the contractor had not cleared out the ditch which had been included in the specification. The Clerk said that she would run the invoice past members once it was received to make sure they were satisfied with the works before it was paid. <p>Agenda item 5. County Councillor report and questions:</p> <p>Members thanked County Councillor Jeremy Hunt for the report circulated prior to the meeting which was NOTED. In summary, residents were being asked for their views on the County Council's priorities and how it proposed to spend taxpayers' money as it worked to close a £44.9m budget gap for the year 2024/25. The proposals included reductions of £11.8m, alongside a possible increase of council tax of 2.99%, plus an additional adult social care precept of 2%. It included an extra £53m in revenue spending on vital services including an additional £31.2m for vulnerable children and young people, £12.3m more for adults' social care, and an extra £5m to maintain the county's 4,000km of roads. If approved, the proposals would still leave a budget gap of £4.4m to be bridged, described as 'challenging but achievable'. Full details of the consultation, open until 10 December 2023, could be found at www.westsussex.gov.uk/budget. Cllr Hunt said it was important to make the best use of limited resources. With increased financial pressures and demands being felt by everyone they were looking at every option to protect vital services and invest in key priorities. It was important to hear the views of residents and he urged people to take part in the consultation. In the meantime, they were committed to lobbying government to recognise the constraints being placed on local authorities and rising demand impacting local services. The Cabinet would consider feedback from the consultation in January before recommending the Council Plan and budget to Full Council in February.</p> <p>A new website covered many aspects of how the County was investing in roads, including key facts and videos Better Roads - West Sussex County Council</p>	<p>Cllr Goacher</p> <p>Clerk</p>

Young people aged 16 to 20 were able to qualify for a discounted bus fare with the launch of a '16 to 20 Bus Saver' scheme developed by the County Council alongside bus operators and funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) as part of a national scheme to boost bus services. West Sussex had received a £19m grant. The scheme meant young people would receive a discount until they turned 21, giving them the freedom to travel for less. It would run until March 2025 and could be extended by bus operators if successful. To get the discount, young people needed to show a valid ID or a [CitizenCard](#). [16 to 20 Bus Saver - West Sussex County Council](#)

The County Council's meals on wheels service had been named joint winner of a prestigious national award. Health & Independent Living Support (HILS) were one of four joint winners of the Meals On Wheels Service of the Year prize at the National Association of Care Catering Awards. The service offered more than just a hot meal, including a friendly face, company and someone to check they were safe and well. They had worked in partnership with other organisations to raise awareness of various wellbeing and care initiatives, and shared important practical advice to help people live independently. For more information, please call 0330 2000 103 or email westsussex@hils-uk.org

A home upgrade grant was available for lower income households living in the least energy efficient homes without gas central heating. Residents could qualify for free energy efficiency improvements, including solid wall insulation (up to £10,000), air source heat pumps (up to £14,000) and solar panels (up to £6,000). [Apply | Warmer Homes](#) The County Council had webpages to provide help, advice and practical support for those facing cost of living pressures [Cost of living - West Sussex County Council](#)

Communities highway scheme - Binderton/West Dean Speed Limit reduction: The speed data review supported extending the two 50mph zones as far as Lavant to the south and to West Dean to the north. Sussex Police had confirmed their support and the TRO team have confirmed that we should be able to advertise the proposals - for consultation - this side of Christmas (date TBC).

Operation Watershed - B2141 Flood Relief scheme adjacent to Crows Hall Farm: Although the work was now complete, I noticed that the ditch on the south side, and to the east of the Courtyard, had not been cleaned. This is something that Cllr Graham raised with me, which is why I made sure it was included in the specification. I hope that Cllr Graham (whom I believe was leading on this project) raised this with the contractor before signing the work off for payment, but just in case not I have raised it with the Operation Watershed team.

Agenda item 6. District Councillor report and questions:

Members thanked District Councillor Henry Potter for the report circulated prior to the meeting which was **NOTED**. In summary, Cllr Potter reported that the delay in preparing the final review of the District Local Plan for presentation to the Planning Inspectorate for adoption was slipping further into the future. This, all because of the indifference and lack of support by National Highways (NH) for the necessary works to the A27 included in the review to enable the target of 625 new homes per annum to be met. By law, the review and adoption of a new Local Plan **MUST** be completed by mid-2025! There was a risk that this may not be met. The transport study, carried out in 2016, was now out of date, evidenced by the current situation surrounding Chichester. If a new transport study was deemed necessary, this would take another 9 or 10 months which would take us close to the cut-off date. It was hard to appreciate that an Agency, NH, responsible for transport, the backbone of our economy, could be so negative. The most recent two meetings of the Development Plan and Infrastructure Panel had exposed the difficulties faced by planning officers. The only consolation was that NH had suggested that major planning decisions should be refused or deferred until any impact on the highways network was resolved. Quite what would become of the Strategic Site for 1,300 new homes at Tangmere, which already benefits from Outline Permission, must be in doubt due to the immense impact on the A27, which was already 'at capacity'. In the meantime, WSCC had proposed a review of the highways network around Chichester to mitigate the increased use of A and B class roads. What they could possibly do to New Road, Hunters Race and other feeder roads is far beyond my imagination.

Invites should soon be issued for any local authorities, parish councils, schools and landowners to apply for discounted tree saplings to plant in neighbourhoods. The scheme followed last year's introduction of the Queens Green Canopy during which 25,000 trees were planted throughout the district. We hope it will be repeated this winter. Cllr Potter appreciated that West Dean Estate was proactive in planting

trees but if the Parish Council would like to join this scheme and plant a few more, details could be found on the CDC website.

The recent weather had tested resources, but apart from localised flooding, the district had been luckier than most. The threat of storm Ciaran was well addressed by most responsible authorities issuing warnings and helpful contact details. It looks to have passed with the worst fear for us, power failure, not materialising. We must be thankful. Apart from torrential rain, it was no worse than the '87 Storm.

At the Cabinet meeting on 7 November, the Councils Financial Strategy and Plan for '24-'25 through to '28-'29 would be discussed. This included setting the minimum level of reserves, recommended by the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee. Also, that the reserve budget of £8m set aside for the potential needs caused by the Cv19 pandemic, and unused, be returned to the general reserve fund. Another issue to be considered is a recommendation to increase car parking charges but this would be subject to a public consultation which would attract much criticism from users. These were still reasonable compared to other municipalities, Winchester and Horsham are cited in the Cabinet Report, but the sight of so many empty parking spaces in car parks at any time of day should be of great concern. I can only think of Freddie Laker whose motto was "sell 'em cheap and fill every seat" I hear many folk complain about car parking charges, any increase is unlikely to be welcome.

Members discussed that although they would like to plant new trees, the Council did not any land where they could be planted. Cllr Graham said that West Dean Estate was already planting 25 hectares this winter and would like to plant community orchards in the future.

Members also discussed that the parking charges in Chichester were expensive compared to other nearby towns with many spaces already empty. Members agreed that any price increase could deter people from visiting the town centre, and although they understood that local government budgets were tight, the District Council needed to look at the bigger picture and do everything they could to encourage people to support local businesses and the high street. It was **AGREED** that the Clerk would submit these comments in response to the consultation on behalf of the Parish Council.

Agenda item 7. Traffic/roads update:

- a) **Speedwatch and SID report:** There was no update from Speedwatch as the weather had prevented the group from meeting. Cllr Graham reported that the SID had recorded a new highest speed of 120mph going out of the village. Cllr Graham said there was no response from the County Council following the online form he had submitted about the installation of average speed cameras and that he would chase this. Cllr Graham said a meeting would be held with a traffic consultant from the South Downs National Park Authority, who had written to recognise the speeding issue and offered their support in finding a solution but had added that it would be difficult to solve due to the nature of the road. Members discussed this point and agreed that it was not a traditional road going through a village centre but what mattered was that it went past a primary school and pub which was a dangerous section of the road. It was discussed that a high number of passing cars were in a higher speed bracket and camera monitoring with police support was the only way the issue could be tackled. This was similar to the scheme implemented on the A272. Members considered that average speed cameras would reduce the number of speed signs needed which would also tidy up the verges.
- b) **A286 Binderton, speed limit change:** There was no further update.

Agenda item 8. Planning Update: Members **RESOLVED** to have **NO OBJECTION** to the following planning application.

SDNP/23/04291/HOUS: Oak framed open porch on south elevation, fenestration changes (to include new stable door, French door with brick quoining and blocking in of first floor window) on west elevation. Post Office Cottage South Old West Dean Road, West Dean, West Sussex. PO18 9HU

Agenda item 9. Southern Water: Members discussed the blockage in the sewer, caused by wet wipes, which happened in late September and damaged the local environment when a manhole spilled into the

Clerk

Cllr
Graham

horse field and access path. Southern Water tankers pumped from the manhole by Manor Farm for three days to try and alleviate the flow. It appeared that there had been no clear up operation and the issue had been reported to the Environment Agency and Chichester District Council, as well as Southern Water. Cllr Corbett reported that the tankers were back pumping again and there had been no notice of their arrival, and it was likely to be connected to the recent heavy rainfall. It was discussed that the notices to warn residents were still up from the last occasion. Cllr Graham said that Southern Water were creating a parking bay on the village green to fit two eight-wheeled tankers which could also be used by members of the public when pumping was not needed. Members agreed that the current situation was not acceptable, faecal contamination posed a serious health issue and Southern Water did not seem to be accountable for its actions.

Agenda item 10. Telephone kiosk: Cllr De Groot said that the kiosk was now completed. Members agreed that it looked very nice and thanked Cllr De Groot for his hard work on the project.

Agenda item 11. Cemetery tree and hedge maintenance: Cllr Goacher said he had not yet replaced the gate post at the Cemetery. Cllr Graham said he would find out who owned the hedge that needed to be cut back. Cllr Goacher said he would then draw up a specification for the hedge to be cut and the Clerk said she would also get quotes from other companies as a comparison to be considered at the next meeting. Cllr Slade said that there was a large hole in the path at the back of the yew tree which was a trip hazard and said she would fill it with soil.

Agenda item 12. Winter maintenance plan: Cllr Graham said he had updated the current draft which he would send to the Clerk so that it could be submitted to the County Council.

Agenda item 13. Finance:

- a) Members considered the circulated draft budget for financial year 2024/25, looking at each line of expenditure. In summary, the following was discussed:
- Planting a variety of spring bulbs and fruit trees in the village green using the amount allocated for general village maintenance.
 - Buying a new salt bin near the Four Walls and the Grinch in Chilgrove.
 - Holding a commemorative event for the 80th anniversary of D-Day in June 2024. It was **AGREED** to discuss this at the next meeting in January.
 - Investigating the purchase of Royal British Legion commemorative silhouettes. The Clerk said she would circulate information to members.

It was **AGREED** to defer a final decision on the budget until the next meeting in January when the taxbase information would be available from the District Council which could be used to calculate the exact percentage increase.

- b) Members **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the list of payments totalling £632.68 and due immediately (to be paid before 10 January 2024 and required advance authorisation). There were payments totalling £1,126.42 made since 13 September 2023 which members **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** retrospectively. (Appendix A).
- c) Members **NOTED** and **APPROVED** the bank reconciliations to 31 October 2023. (Appendix A).
- d) Members **NOTED** the report from the internal auditor (Andy Beams, Mulberry & Co) following the meeting which took place with the Clerk on 23 September 2023. The internal auditor had reported that: "The systems and internal procedures at West Dean Parish Council are well established and followed" and recommended that:
- All Register of Members's Interests were uploaded to the website. The Clerk said that all forms had now been returned and she would add them to the website and send the original

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and
Clerk

Cllr
Graham

Clerk

to the District Council.

- A review of the cemetery fees should be included in the 2024/25 budget setting process. The Clerk said she would include this as an agenda item for discussion at the January meeting.
- There were some items with an unknown value on the Asset Register and these should be investigated and either removed or assigned an appropriate value to ensure the asset register total was correct. Cllr Graham said he was working with the Clerk on the Asset Register, and it would be brought to Council for approval at the next meeting in January.

- e) Members **APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY** to implement the new pay scales for 2023/24 as set out by NALC, and to adjust the salary from the next payment and backdated to 21 August 2023 when the Clerk commenced her employment.

Agenda item 14. Correspondence to note: Members **NOTED** the list of correspondence.

Agenda item 15. Meeting dates in 2024: Members **NOTED** and **AGREED** the meeting dates for 2024, as follows: 10 January, 13 March, 8 May, 10 July, 11 September and 13 November.

Agenda item 16. Announcements for the next meeting: Cllr Flemming said that he would circulate a summary to members before the next meeting about rural crime and access on certain roads in the Parish. Cllr Flemming explained that the County Council's maintenance of The Grinch was a concern, which was getting worse with the wet weather and large vehicles further breaking up the edges. The fire brigade had recently said they could not guarantee a fire engine would be able to use the road. It was **AGREED** to discuss this as an agenda item at the next meeting in January.

Agenda item 17. Date of next meeting: The next meeting was scheduled to be held on Wednesday 10 January 2024 at 7.30pm.

The meeting finished at 9pm.

Appendix A

Finance report

1. Payments for approval

		Total	Net	VAT
BACS	Confidential payments Nov 23	446.53	446.53	0.00
	Working from home allowance Nov			
BACS	23	18.00	18.00	0.00
BACS	Chichester Payroll Services Nov 23	15.00	15.00	0.00
BACS	HMRC Nov 23	111.60	111.60	0.00
BACS	Mileage Nov 23	9.27	9.27	0.00
BACS	MS 365 Nov 23	11.28	9.40	1.88
BACS	O2 mobile phone Nov 23	21.00	17.50	3.50

632.68 627.30 5.38

2. Payments made since the last meeting, 13 Sept

Ref		Total	Net	VAT
38	BACS Currys Canon Maxify printer	125.99	120.00	5.99
39	BACS Viking paper, cartridges, notepads	93.02	77.52	15.50
43	BACS Jeff's Computers, website fee	50.00	50.00	0.00
44	BACS O2 mobile phone Oct 23	21.00	17.50	3.50
45	BACS MS 365 Oct 23	11.28	9.40	1.88

47	BACS	Mulberry & Co interim internal audit	234.00	195.00	39.00
48	BACS	Confidential payments Oct 23	446.53	446.53	0.00
48	BACS	Work from home allowance Oct 23	18.00	18.00	0.00
49	BACS	HMRC Oct 23	111.60	111.60	0.00
50	BACS	Chichester Payroll Services Oct 23	15.00	15.00	0.00

			1,126.42	1,060.55	65.87
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3. Receipts

5	BACS	Barclays: 2nd Precept payment	6,945.75		
S7	BACS	Santander: Interest 01/10/23	5.36		
S8	BACS	Santander: Interest 01/11/23	5.54		
			<u>6,956.65</u>		

4. Bank reconciliation

Barclays

Balance per statement 31/10/23	£69,931.52
Less outstanding payments	£0.00
Add outstanding receipts	£0.00
Add petty cash	£0.00
Revised bank	£69,931.52

Cashbook control

Balance forward 01/04/23	£28,412.51
Add total receipts to date	£53,412.74
Less total payments to date	£11,893.73
Cashbook at 31/10/23	£69,931.52

Santander

Balance per statement 01/11/23	£6,251.99
Less outstanding payments	£0.00
Add outstanding receipts	£0.00
Revised bank	£6,251.99

Cashbook control

Balance forward 01/04/23	£6,216.01
Add total receipts to date	£35.98
Less total payments to date	£0.00
Cashbook at 01/11/23	£6,251.99

<u>Total in both accounts</u>	<u>76,183.51</u>
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