

WEST DEAN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Wednesday 8 May 2024 at 7pm

West Dean College

Present: Cllr Steve Corbett, West Dean Parish Council
Cllr Helen Court, West Dean Parish Council
Cllr John Fleming, West Dean Parish Council
Cllr Keith Goacher, West Dean Parish Council
Cllr Amy Green, West Dean Parish Council
Cllr William De Groot, West Dean Parish Council
Cllr Ian Graham, West Dean Parish Council
Cllr Cathy Slade, West Dean Parish Council
Cllr Jeremy Hunt, West Sussex County Council
Alex Barron, Chief Executive of West Dean College
Wendy Goacher
One member of the public.

In attendance: Clare Kennett, Clerk to West Dean Parish Council.

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Corbett, Chairman of West Dean Parish Council.

- Welcome:** Cllr Corbett opened the meeting and welcomed attendees, explaining that it was not a Parish Council meeting, but organised by the Parish Council on behalf of the Parish.
- Apologies for absence:** Chris Williams, Headteacher of West Dean Primary School, sent his apologies.
- Report from West Dean Primary School:** Seven members of the Pupil Parliament gave a presentation about the many exciting and fantastic opportunities available to children at the school. The children said they had been on many trips, including to the National History Museum and attendance at the O2 for the Young Voices 2024 Choir where they had sung songs from Matilda. The whole school's production last summer was called Onik and was about the three little pigs. Every child played a part, either on stage or behind the scenes. The children said they were grateful to West Dean College for the use of the marquee in the college grounds. This year the school's production would be about the Paris 2024 Olympics and would feature a range of sports. The school had taken part in an art event called the Big Hoot to raise money for charity, and they were painting a large owl which would be part of the exhibition. The SDNPA were also installing owl boxes in the school grounds. The subject was being used in their writing to inspire their imagination. West Sussex Fire and Rescue had attended the school and had put out their mock-up of the Great Fire of London which they had set alight. They were supporting nature by redeveloping the pond and wildlife area at the school which the children said was a lovely place to be and to learn about the natural environment. The children said they often used the College gardens and arboretum and thanked the College for their special relationship. The children said a section of a tree had been turned into a table in the library which they enjoyed working at as they could see the tree's rings to guess how old it was. The school had built links with another school in Mexico and the children had shared videos and letters with them. The Headteacher had been to visit and had stayed in the house that Edward James had stayed in. They hoped the leaders from the school in Mexico would visit West Dean. Some of the children would be going on a residential trip to Normandy where they would be staying on a farm, and they would also be learning about the D-Day landings, visiting the beaches and seeing the silhouettes looking across Gold Beach. The children thanked the Parish Council for the D-Day flag which they would be

flying to commemorate D-Day. Cllr Corbett thanked the children for an interesting presentation and for speaking so confidently and enthusiastically about the school and their activities.

4. **Report from the Edward James Foundation:** Alex Barron, Chief Executive, said that the College was working on a 10-year strategic plan. They were working to connect with local and international communities and were delighted to be working with West Dean Primary School to support them with links to a school in Mexico. The college was growing student numbers with long-term investments in the campus and estate, along with developing equality, diversity and inclusivity, and new trustees who gave the broadest impact to the college. The pandemic had been tough financially on the college, but summer numbers were now back to the pre-pandemic levels. There was demand for higher education courses and short courses were on an upward trajectory. The college had established a new design studio in Bloomsbury in London in a learning centre. They would be moving design school activity to the building and would be offering 100 short courses in the heart of London. Half of the students were new to the College, and it was hoped they would be interested in moving to West Dean to study longer courses. The College was increasing its sustainability across the estate and would be planting a further 20,000 trees. It was a complicated and military process to plant the trees as it was being done in a way to ensure a continuous canopy in the future to support biodiversity, working with the Forestry Commission. Elm was in the tree planting scheme, but ash was not yet being planted, although the Forestry Commission was doing trials to develop disease resistant trees. Due the quantity of trees needed, orders had to be placed in advance. The College was using local crops and produce in its shops and on its menus. It hoped to be climate neutral by 2030 and would be embedding this ethos through its courses. Local wildlife corridors were important to help species move in response to climate change, and they were working with other local estates on the Weald and Waves project. There were plans for expansion of the campus and they were looking a detailed designs for individual buildings. The work was expected to start in 2023/27 and planning applications would consider the sensitive site working with the SDNPA and Historic England. A question was asked if there was a focus to the design courses and Alex said it was interior and garden design which fitted the College as Edward James had been motivated by both. Alex said there was a demand for design courses and the new venture in London would enable the college to appeal to a wider audience. During the pandemic, material packs went all around the world which had helped to raise the profile of the College.
5. **Summary of Parish Council activities:** Cllr Corbett said at this time last year, the Council was celebrating the successful event to honour the King's Coronation, which took place on 7 May with great success, thanks to help from all directions including the Selsey Arms who hosted the event. Now a year later the Council was planning another village event to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day, again to be held at the pub, and all look forward to it. (8 June). The Council had arranged for a flagpole to be installed at the school (and the pub on the day) with a commemorative flag which I hope will be appreciated. It had also commissioned some silhouettes of the unknown soldiers (male and female), locations to be confirmed. There would be a school visit to the Normandy beaches to remember the event, and I hope they will take something from this to mark the occasion. We said farewell to our faithful Clerk, Hannah-Louise, who moved to Australia, and we wish her well over there. Her place has been ably taken by our new Clerk, Clare, who has served us impeccably ever since, long to continue we hope. We also welcomed John Fleming as our new Councillor, followed later by Amy Green, whose contributions are much appreciated to widen the pool of expertise on the Council. The SID device was finally installed and has been useful in deterring some of the traffic offenders, but not I'm afraid all of them. I think the maximum speed recorded at one point was 120mph, which is hard to believe. However, efforts continue, ably assisted by the Community Speedwatch programme and their volunteers, so we plug away at this ongoing problem. We commend the activities of Cllr de Groot, who has been assiduous all year in holding Highways to account, and moreover getting results, whether it be verge clearance, general repairs, and now the introduction of a 40mph

speed limit through Binderton, and a buffer zone, which I think has helped the approach to West Dean as a result. We also thank our County Councillor Jeremy Hunt for his full backing along the way. Operation Watershed continued into Phase two, to further improve the drainage and flood management along the B2141 in Chilgrove. Planning wise there were few developments. The SDNPA have constructed a new ramp from Centurion's Way to the Motor Road, with the co-operation of the school, which must be a great help. They now have put forward plans to improve the footway along the main road to link up with the next Northern route, although this is going to take some time and further planning. There were a few minor applications for domestic improvements and student accommodation, none of them contentious, and a refusal of a Variation of Condition at Colworth Farm which is now under appeal. We have instructed an inspection of memorials at the churchyard and the cemetery, for a health and safety check, and will report back. We are also looking at tree and hedge maintenance and have set in motion action on controlling molehills in both graveyards. We have instituted regular updates of Parish meetings for publication in the Valley Diary every two months, to widen the scope of information available to parishioners in West Dean and throughout the valley. Of course, all the information can also be found on our website. The Parish Council finances are in good shape, with a healthy cash cushion should it be required. We budgeted to break even this year, and everything shows signs of good management, and our accounts were signed off by our accountants with no issues raised. Potholes of course are in the headlines and continue to be a major headache to all road users. We continually report these where we can and urge all others to do the same (by the WSCC Highways website), not only to try and get things done but to draw attention to the massive scale of the problem. We are also in communication with Highways about the state of the carriageway on the Motor Road, and along parts of Grinch Lane, and have been told some work is scheduled for June. Finally, the biggest headline of the year, as before, is of course Southern Water, and the state of the sewage system through the village. I don't need to list the continuing problems, there have been so many, and all well covered in the local press, and the Valley Diary. We do receive updates from SW, but it is their actions not words which will tell how things might improve. I wish I could report that things are close to a resolution, but sadly this is not the case. We will continue to engage with them and keep you all updated.

6. **Public session:** A member of the public said she had been interested to hear about Southern Water.
7. **Date of next meeting:** The next meeting would take place on Wednesday 14 May 2025.

Meeting closed at 7.45pm.