

Welcome to our November 2024 Newsletter

I believe we all saw the value in having a strong Parish Council when a planning application was submitted to redevelop the 'Potters Market' area which would have resulted in the effective loss of our village shop and Post Office. After strong local opposition which was voiced at a very well attended Parish Council meeting the application was withdrawn but do not assume that this has now gone away. We may see a revised planning application for the site and we must be in a position to respond. There will also be increased pressure on Local Authorities for more housebuilding as new targets from National Government could mean an increase of up to 28% above the previous target in our area. Your Parish Council is working hard to try to maintain a sustainable balance in West Hill but do not underestimate just how daunting a task it is. The Council will not be able to do this if it is inquorate which is very possible with the small number of Councillors we currently have so please do join us and help to support the village. Please also use your right to respond to planning applications and make sure that your voice is heard.

Despite being 3 councillors, a lot has happened since our last Newsletter and a lot more will happen in the coming months. Look out for news of the long-awaited Village Hall Footpath.

Please do help us to help the village. *Cllr Francis Pullman, WHPC Chairman*

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- *28% more new homes for East Devon?*
- *Meet Sarah, West Hill's Post Office Manager*

Dear West Hill Community

Please help us! We have 3 Councillor vacancies. West Hill Parish Council needs you!

Please consider joining our team of Councillors and help us be a voice for the community. There's only so much that our team of 4 Councillors can do!

For more information

On Page 2, Cllr Ann Cooper describes her first few months as a Parish Councillor.

Who can be a Parish Councillor? You must:

- be a UK or commonwealth citizen,
- be a least 18 years old.
- be on the electoral register of the parish, or;
- during the previous 12 months have worked in the parish
- or, for the whole of the previous 12 months lived in the parish or within three miles of the parish boundary.

Please check the Council's website or contact our Parish Clerk for further information. Contact details below

Being a Councillor – What's involved?

Hello, I'm Ann Cooper. A Parish Councillor! I started as a new councillor earlier this year and have enjoyed the challenge and variety of the work that I have done so far. It has meant a lot of new words and a real insight into the work of the parish council.

I have lived in West Hill for 30 years and thought that I knew the area well. But I have been down lanes and paths that I never knew existed, to look at the planning proposals for houses, tree felling and environmental consideration when planning new buildings. Who knew that bats and toads would be so important to your planning application!

On a practical level the Parish Council has one meeting per month which is open to the public. We also have occasional workshops and training meetings I belong to the finance working group and the play park one. Both of these are very different and the finance working group involves understanding and careful management of the council's money. The play park group manages the regular maintenance to keep it safe. I have had a lot of feed-back from parents and children who use it and two eager grandsons who have enjoyed using it over the school holidays. New benches have installed recently and we are planning how we can improve the experience for children up to the age of 11. Look out for news in future newsletters.

So far, I have found it a challenging but enjoyable role. I have a much better insight into the workings of West Hill and have met a lot more of the local residents.

We are very short of councillors at the moment, so if anyone is interested, I would recommend that you have a look at the website and come to a council meeting. You will find us a friendly bunch and we would really welcome new members to join our team.

I hope to see you soon, Cllr Ann Cooper



Over the summer months our **Emergency Planning Working Group** has been busy preparing an Emergency plan for the village.... but have YOU thought about

What would YOU would do in an emergency?

Do you have a Household/Family Emergency Plan?

Our working group has prepared the booklet issued with this newsletter which gives an introduction to the work of our team and provides some useful advice and guidance for households to prepare for an emergency.

We encourage you to read the booklet and complete the template in readiness for an emergency.....

..... and we sincerely hope that you never have to use it!

The Parish Council wishes to thank the community members of the working group for the work that they have done.

Please look out for future news on our website or newsletters.

Planning News: East Devon Housing Target to increase by 28%?

Housing Targets set by the Government are an important factor in determining the number of homes that are built each year. Over recent years East Devon District Council (EDDC) has been working towards a new Local Plan for 2022-2042 that sets out a strategy to deliver a Housing Target equivalent to 946 new homes per annum. The scale of this challenge is such that EDDC have proposed development of a further new town, in addition to Cranbrook. Proposed changes to the National Housing Target, announced by the new Government, are expected to result in a potential 28% uplift in East Devon's Housing Target, increasing the annual target to 1,146.

With some urgency, EDDC is now moving into the decision-making phase of the Local Plan process, including decisions on site allocations for residential development. A final public consultation is scheduled for December 2024. If this very challenging timetable can be achieved the new Local Plan could be progressed under the existing target of 946 new homes per year. Otherwise, EDDC will be required to produce a Local Plan to deliver the new Housing target, 1,146 new homes/year.

Sites Allocated for Housing Development in West Hill, Ottery St Mary and surrounds?

EDDC's Local Plan includes a Spatial Strategy which sets out a tiered approach for housing growth in towns and villages, taking into account factors such as the facilities available to each community.

At a series of Local Plan working group meetings (August), WHPC, and many Town/Parish Councils, raised serious concerns about the inadequacy of current infrastructure. WHPC, once again, also contested EDDC's analysis of facilities available in West Hill. WHPC challenged whether West Hill qualified as a Tier 4 settlement with the services and facilities to support day-to-day needs and capable of housing growth. One of the few facilities available, the Morrison's store, may be under threat of closure when, inevitably, a revised planning application is submitted. WHPC's challenge was not accepted.

During September/October EDDC meetings considered sites put forward by landowners/developers. Two of the 17 proposed sites in West Hill were allocated for residential development:

- WH04 Land adjoining Windmill Lane, 36 homes:
- WH18 (previously listed as WH_06) Land north and east of Eastfield, 30 homes:

Cllr Francis Pullman, and a number of West Hill residents, spoke at a meeting to raise objections to the allocation of WH_04 and WH_18. Cllr Pullman also urged the Committee not to allocate sites in the Green Wedge between Ottery St Mary and West Hill. Site Ottry_1b was the only such site to be allocated. In particular, he highlighted the impact of additional traffic through West Hill if site Ottry_1a, (a site, with the potential for 469 homes, along Exeter Road) was developed.

Ottery St Mary will also see growth as sites south of Strawberry Lane have been allocated for residential development plus further sites near Kings School.

For any site allocated in the Local Plan, planning permission must be sought through the usual planning application process. Planning applications for the two West Hill sites were recently considered by EDDC's Planning Committee. Cllr Francis Pullman spoke at the meeting to raise objections on both sites.

- 23/0727/MOUT, Land north of Eastfield, 30 dwellings: approval was confirmed subject to the completion of a s106 legal agreement. A detailed application on this site will have to be approved through the usual process ahead of development.
- 23/1143/FUL land adjacent to Windmill Lane: The Planning Committee raised several concerns and asked the developer to re-consider the layout and number of proposed homes.

The Parish Council will continue to monitor and respond to the progress of the Emerging East Devon Local Plan. Please look out for updates on our website, noticeboards and minutes of our monthly Council meetings (available on the Parish Council website). At the time of writing Towns and villages may see further housing allocations. If insufficient new homes have been allocated for development in the Emerging Local Plan.

Meet Sarah Gurr our West Hill Post Office Manager

Local family connections were instrumental in Sarah being behind the Ottery St Mary Post Office Counter in 2000 and much more recently in West Hill. She oversees the workings of the West Hill Post Office and is responsible for the weekly checks and balances. Considering the notoriety of the Horizon Computer System that is quite a task. The Horizon Computer system has been upgraded and she says that not surprisingly the Post Office management is now willing to facilitate corrections when occasionally human error means that the wrong button is pressed. She says that the worst working time she has is pressing the discrepancy button at the end of each day!



She maintains that the best part of working in West Hill are the lovely customers and colleagues, however the job is not without its funny side and recalls that when working in Ottery a customer did accuse one of her absent colleagues of messing up her cooker after she had topped up her gas meter, on enquiry it turned out that the good lady did not have a gas cooker and it was her electric cooker that she was complaining about! Sarah suggested she check the trip switch and the lady went away happy.

The disappearance of Banks from all but the largest High Streets, has led to the Post Office taking over a number of their traditional counter-top functions saving us long journeys and inconvenience.

Sarah suggests that you check online which Banks have arrangements with the Post Office. One of the functions that causes some aggravation for customers is the facility to obtain quantities of coins and notes for charity events and similar functions, she has to refuse when it is simply in exchange for notes. However cash in the shape of coins and notes can be obtained by using your own bank card to withdraw it. Same results - but accepted route. Banking coin into your own bank account is also just as easy.

There are lots of services that the Post Office provides - Foreign Currency, Vehicle Tax, Bill Payments and Postal Orders.

West Hill Post Office is a drop off and collection point for Evri and DPD but Sarah warns that as the mobile signal in the area is unreliable for QR codes, the use of Photo capture is best and don't forget you will need original forms of ID for collections!

The Post Office pays each branch on the transactions it carries out. You can boost that income at no cost to you by asking for a balance on your bank account whenever you use the post office for a banking transaction.

clerk@westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk

The continued presence of the Post Office in West Hill and indeed our well stocked Morrisons is not assured as the owners of the premises have demonstrated that they would like to develop the site. Morrisons is truly a convenience store for all of us and in particular a great asset for those of us who no longer drive. Don't just drop in for the items you have forgotten, stay and shop for more. If we lose Morrisons, we lose the Post Office and if we lose the Post Office, we lose Morrisons.

Dates for your diary

Parish Council meetings: Tuesday 3rd Dec +7th January 7.30pm at the Village Hall.

Our meetings are open to the public and include an opportunity for the public to speak.

Sunday 10th November 10.15am War Memorial:

Memorial wreath laying ceremony Temporary road closure - School Lane and West Hill Road (between Elsdon lane and the junction with Bendarroch Rd).

Contact Us:

We welcome your comments. Please contact our Parish Clerk, preferably by email.

Do you want to join our **mailing list**? We use this to send you updates such as meeting agendas. Details of our Privacy Policy are available on our website.

Thank you for your support!