

WEST HILL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, MONDAY 10th March 2023 7.30PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Present	Cllr Della Cannings (DC) – Chairman, Cllr Alison Carr (AC), Cllr Amanda Townsend (AT), Cllr Margaret Piper (MP)
In attendance	Parish Clerk Anne Oliver Approx 40 members of the public Apologies: Cllr Peter Bennett , Cllr Neil Bromley(NB), Cllr Stephen Owen (SO)

Item (a)	Discussion and decisions (b)
APM23/1	<p>Welcome and Chairman's announcements Chairman DC welcomed Councillors, guests and members of the public and began the meeting at 7.30pm.</p> <p>The Chairman set out the purpose of the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Parish Meeting is held for the electorate of this Parish of West Hill for electors to have their say on anything they consider important for the people of the Parish. • It is an opportunity for the Council to explain what it has been doing, for organisations that have received Council awards to explain what they do and any others to update us on community issues, including a report from our District/County Councillor. <p>The Chairman noted the Parish Council (WHPC) is coming to the end of its term of office and all 7 seats will be vacated for the 4th May 2023 election. Nominations have to be made by 4pm on 4th April 2023 to East Devon District Council on the prescribed forms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If there are 8 or more candidates then an election will be held. ○ If there are 7 or fewer candidates, all candidates take office unopposed ○ If there are only 1 or 2 candidates the Council would be inquorate and EDDC would have to step in to manage creating a viable council. <p>Additionally, unless the Council has a Clerk it cannot operate, are currently advertising the forthcoming vacancy, but to date with little or no interest.</p>
APM23/2	<p>To receive the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 16th April 2019 The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 9th May 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record. Proposed: Cllr Alison Carr, Seconded: Dave Underwood. Chairman DC signed the minutes.</p>
APM23/3	<p>Chairman's report</p> <p>Chairman DC gave a report on behalf of the Parish Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the last year Cllr Cook stood down from the Council. No by-election was requested by the required 10 electors, so candidates were requested to come forward. I'm pleased to say following interview Neil Bromley was co-opted a Councillor. 2. The Council strap line is "working with the Community to maintain and enhance West Hills Special Character". Key to this is being a consultee on all planning matters, our views on behalf of the community to EDDC are very important. This last year has been busy for the Council in enabling the community to be involved in the development of the draft EDDC Local Plan, and consulting on proposed developments for West Hill – currently Oak Road and Toadpit Lane, but also potentially for land between Eastfield and Windmill Lane.

3. The Council has always had an ambition to acquire land in the village for recreational use. It's disappointing that this hasn't been achieved.
4. Road safety issues are a priority for the Council and for residents of the Village. The Parish Council has taken action where possible: Vehicle activated signage, increased number of sites, provision of hi viz jackets to pre-school children, ongoing liaison with DCC Highways. We're grateful for the work of the West Hill Community Speedwatch team of volunteers.
5. We had a Road Safety Working Group but during the year Cllr Bennett stood down from all working groups it was not viable to continue the Group. With 7 councillors all volunteers there is only so much that can be achieved.
6. Being a woodland village is important and we have continued our liaison with the Woodland Trust over Broadoak Plantation and the Councils provision of picnic tables in the glade area. We also link to the district councillor and EDDC tree officer with regards tree preservation orders and especially concern regarding the impact of development on trees. We had an arboretum working group another that Cllr Bennett stood down from and it was not viable for the group to continue.
7. During the year planning permission was achieved for the proposed pathway from West Hill Road to the Village Hall, work with the Village Hall Trustees has continued to receive tenders for the work. It is hoped that the new Council carries forward this project which has already incurred considerable costs to the council tax payers.
8. The Village Hall Trustees have been very helpful in enabling a new lease to be signed on the Playpark, where new equipment has been installed and the old, dilapidated play boat removed leaving space for a new generation of play activity equipment. The Playpark has regular inspections from Councillors, EDDC etc, as well as the council funding the litter and recycling bins there, the ongoing maintenance of equipment and grass cutting and bark replacement. It is to be hoped the new council will develop further this facility.
9. I could list a whole host of Council achievements (commemorative tree planting, supporting jubilee and coronation events) etc in the last year and since the 2019 election, but this is your evening.
10. The regular newsletters, delivered by our volunteer posties, has continued to be a vital link with the community and in ensuring you are briefed on all our work.
11. I mentioned last year how a resident deemed a "vexatious complainant" had detracted the Council from key work for the community and I am saddened to say such has continued as is evident through the minutes of the Council meetings. This is an intolerable situation.
12. I pay tribute to those current and past Councillors of the Parish Council who have contributed so much. In particular though I must mention our Clerk who will be leaving in early May and I wish to put on record the sterling work she has done in a very professional, organised and friendly matter – being a main contributor to enabling this young parish council to develop. Thank you Anne. (Those attending the meeting supported the Chairmans comments and gave a round of applause for the Clerk).
13. And another positive note – the Council haven't put up the level of council tax precept for the coming year."

The Chairman invited other Cllrs to speak on the achievements they were proud of:

Cllr AT

- "was proud to lay a wreath at the Remembrance Service on behalf of the Parish Council. A very moving occasion
- Speaking on behalf of the Council at the Straitgate Quarry Appeal Inquiry

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working with Cllrs to install a new climbing frame in the playpark and was proud to cut the ceremonial ribbon at the opening ceremony.” <p>Cllr AC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “To work “behind the scenes” on the Council’s website, on the Council’s finances and Governance as a member of the Finance and Policy Working Groups. - The Council is inspected twice a year and we always get a clean bill of health” <p>Cllr MP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Main focus on community engagement through the council newsletter, (The) Messenger articles, community events especially for the Platinum Jubilee” <p>Cllr DC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “In the face of adversity for the Council to have achieved so much. - the installation of two defibrillators (at Eastfield and RBL) - and the establishment of a Community First responder scheme. - Wildflowers initiative and more”.
<p>APM23/4</p>	<p>Reports from County Councillor and District Councillor Jess Bailey</p> <p>District/County Councillor/Jess Bailey thanked the Parish Council and commented that she and the Council worked together very effectively on behalf of the village.</p> <p>She gave a brief update on her current priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Infrastructure and services: for the first time children living in the Kings School catchment area but not attending a feeder school may not be allocated a place for Sep-2023. Cllr JB was concerned that this demonstrates the pressure on local services. • EDDC’s Emerging Local Plan and Strategic Planning Committee. <p>Cllr Bailey then highlighted her Locality Grant Fund (DCC) and encourage local groups to contact her for further information regards possible small grant awards.</p>
<p>APM23/5</p>	<p>Reports from Local Organisations, groups and grant recipients and questions from Electors</p> <p>Guest Speaker, Emily Lezzeri, CEO Ottery Help Scheme, Chairman Ottery + District Health Matters</p> <p>Emily thanked Cllr Bailey and the Parish Council for their support and grant awards. She then gave brief reports:</p> <p>Ottery Help Scheme has reached its 30th anniversary. With over 900 people registered, including over 100 from West Hill, the team are kept very busy. The team consists of 5 members of staff and 130 volunteers. Some of the services provided include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Volunteer drivers taking individuals to medical appointments - Minibus outings to encourage people ‘to get out and about’, meet people etc - Receive/make over 3000 calls per month <p>Their website provides further information. www.otteryhelpscheme.org.uk</p> <p>Ottery Help Scheme’s move to a new office in Silver Street, Ottery St Mary, has been very successful. The team are now more accessible to the community and have recruited more volunteers.</p> <p>Ottery + District Health Matters brings together representatives of local medical services organisations and community groups incl Coleridge Medical Centre, Hospital, Hospiscare. Men in Sheds etc. The groups purpose is to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - give the community a voice on what’s working well and what isn’t, and - to bring together and work with the relevant groups who can bring about change. <p>Emily invited people to contact her via Ottery Help Scheme as the the group want to engage with the community.</p> <p>All attendees were invited to speak:</p>

1. Eileen Perkins, a member of the newly formed **Arboretum Group**, invited village residents to join the group to increase awareness and understanding of West Hill Trees. She also invited the community to join the group for a 1hr walk led by a knowledgeable guide on Coronation weekend, Monday 8th May, starting at 11.00am at the RBL clubhouse, School Lane.

Eileen, also gave a brief update on her voluntary work as **West Hill's Footpath Warden** which includes an annual survey of West Hill's Public Footpaths.

2. A member of the public raised concerns. Comments include
 - "the Council is hamstrung.
 - The issues are evident in the newsletters and minutes
 - One individual as a resident and a Councillor has costs the Council over £8,000
 - He attends meetings and votes with the Council and later objects
 - The Community has a voice and can take action
 - You have a voice. Write to the council. Speak at meetings.
 - If the Council didn't have this individual would the Clerk stay on?"

The Chairman noted that the £8,000 costs incurred by the Council were public funds payable by the West Hill community.

3. Another member of the public asked if the community has power to request a **vote of no confidence in a Councillor**.

The Chairman explained that the community could request a Parish Poll. This could be arranged in matter of weeks however there may be constraints as the Local Elections take place in May and Pre-election period begins on 27th March. Also, the Parish Council would incur the costs. (*For further information EDDC website [Elections - Parish polls - East Devon](#)*)

Members of the public raised further questions to further understand the process and options.

A member of the public proposed a "vote of no confidence in Cllr Peter Bennett". The individual was asked to confirm they were eligible to propose a motion, as an elector the Parish, and their details were recorded. ". The proposal was seconded by more than 10 people.

The Chairman then called for a vote on the proposed statement: "this meeting has no confidence in Cllr Peter Bennett's capabilities as a Parish Councillor to represent the views and interests of the community whilst observing his obligations under the Code of Conduct."

The votes cast by a show of hands were: In favour 25, Against 5, Abstain 8. A check was made to ensure all those voting were electors of the Parish.

The Chairman confirmed that the Vote of No Confidence would be reported to the next Council meeting.

Many members of the public made further comments expressing their concerns.

4. **West Hill Community Speedwatch:** West Hill's team of volunteers are one of over 200 teams across Devon who carried out over 3,500 roadside sessions in 2022. The West Hill team held 50 session in 2022 but would like to do more if more volunteers come forward. Anyone interested in volunteering, for as little as 1 hour a month, are asked to contact Richard Bonnie.
5. **St Michael's Church**, will be holding a community event in July: "Celebrating the lives of people in West Hill". Items, such as a wedding dress, will be used to tell the many,

	<p>interesting stories of people in the village. Anyone interested in getting involved are asked to contact Richard Bonnie.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Richard and Sue Bonnie, the Church and PCC for their work and support for the village.</p> <p>6. West Hill Royal British Legion: Dave Underwood noted that the West Hill branch of the Royal British Legion was established in 1927 whilst the clubhouse was opened in 1947. The clubhouse has undergone a programme of refurbishment, £250k over 10 years, and now offers great facilities such as a professional standard kitchen. The club is open to the community not just for members. The clubhouse is available as a venue for local groups looking for a meeting place. Dave thanked the Parish Council for their support through grant awards, including their grant towards a new flagpole installed to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. The RBL intend to hold a street party on Sunday 7th May to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III. The event will be open to all residents. The 2022 Platinum Jubilee street party was very popular and it was hoped that more people would join the 2023 event, hopefully on a bright sunny day!</p> <p>7. Cllr AT gave a short report from the West Hill Community First Responder (CFR) Team. The team, 4-5 volunteers, cover West Hill and surrounding area. Following thorough training, members of the team, at times to suit themselves, can make themselves available to the Ambulance Service. CFR can get called out to a wide range of 999 calls, and as they are local, often arrive before an ambulance. The team has access to two sets of "kit", including defibrillator, oxygen, various monitors for blood pressure, oxygen levels, bandages etc. Cllr AT thanked DCC Cllr Bailey and the Parish Council for their sizeable grant awards to fund the 2nd "kit".</p> <p>8. West Hill Wasps are a thriving mixed football club of local children who aim to have fun! With over 250 members supported by volunteer coaches, welfare officer, etc they have a busy schedule. However, Dr Doug Ferguson explained that their current ground is outside West Hill and lacks facilities such as toilets, parking etc. He put out a plea to local landowners for land to rent in/near West Hill.</p> <p>9. A member of the public raised concerns regarding road safety in Beech Park near the Village Hall/School. DCC Cllr advised she was in discussion with DCC Highways to explore options such as single/double yellow lines on sections of the area. She explained that the decision making process is very lengthy and would involve a public consultation. She noted that it had taken 18-24 months to seek approval for the double yellow lines on a section of Bendarroch Road (and they hadn't been painted yet).</p> <p>10. The Chairman gave an update on the McColls store in West Hill. It was understood that key members of staff had resigned and were soon to leave. The Parish Council shared the community concerns for the future of the shop and Post Office. The lack of stock and broken chiller cabinets were not encouraging. She explained that the Council has twice written to Morrisons to express the concerns and highlight the potential of the shop. She confirmed that the Council had written to Morrisons and to the Post Office group following the news of the resignations.</p> <p>Members of the public supported this action and expressed their concerns. A question was raised regarding the poor condition of the building. The Chairman explained the McColls store was leased from another group who owned the building. It was noted that the approved planning permission had expired.</p>
<p>APM 23/6</p>	<p>Close of Meeting</p> <p>The Chairman thanked the speakers for their informative reports and invited questions. There were no questions from the public.</p> <p>The Chairman closed the meeting and invited people to stay for refreshments.</p>

	Meeting closed at 9.02pm
	Refreshments served

Anne Oliver, Parish Clerk

11th March 2023

Minutes Signed:

Date: 18th April 2024