

**WEST HILL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 14th January 2025 AT 7.30pm**

Present:	Chairman Cllr Francis Pullman (FP), Cllr ShirleyMay Saunders (SMS), Cllr Trevor Ingram (TI), Cllr Ann Cooper (AC)
In attendance:	Anne Oliver Parish Clerk, 2 members of the public. PC Darren Wallis
Apologies	DCC/EDDC Cllr Jess Bailey

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council

Item (a)	Discussion and decisions (b)
25/025	<p>Welcome and Chairman's announcements</p> <p>The meeting started at 7.30pm. The Chairman, Cllr FP, welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>The Chairman's announcements included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An apology for the cancellation of the scheduled 7th January 2025 meeting and noted that with the small number of councillors that we have it is all too easy to become inqurate. • In its place a public meeting was called to enable residents to share their views on an amended planning application for Windmill Lane (23/1143/MFUL). A number of residents attended and the discussion informed the WHPC consultee response to EDDC. • As a result of investigating a complaint from a resident it transpired that all records relating to Extraordinary Meetings of the Parish Council were not available on the the WHPC website. The website providers were asked to investigate and checked 1000 update records which is the total history they store and found no record of deletions. The agenda and approved minutes for each of the Extraordinary Meetings have been restored to the website. • The Government have published a proposal to restructure County and District Councils into a single unitary authority, with the purpose of devolving powers from Whitehall to local government. Devon is one of 21 areas that has a two-tier system The Devon District Councils have issued a joint statement. <p>How this restructure may affect town and parish councils was unknown and WHPC awaited further information.</p> <p>Subject to Government approval, Devon County Council will postpone the scheduled May 2025 elections as part of its move towards merging with district councils under the government's devolution proposals.</p> <p>An Extraordinary Council meeting of EDDC expressed a preference for two unitary councils in Devon. The suggested area for one of these proposed unitary councils would cover East Devon, Exeter, Teignbridge, Mid Devon, and North Devon.</p>
25/026	<p>Apologies. To receive apologies and approve reasons for absence, if considered appropriate. DCC/EDDC Cllr JB was unable to attend the meeting and sent her apologies.</p>
25/027	<p>Public question time (3 minutes): To allow members of the public present to give their question/comments to the Parish Council on issues on this agenda or raise issues for further consideration at the discretion of the Chairman, before the start of the Parish Council meeting. Members of the public may not take part in the Parish Council meeting itself. <i>(Contributions are limited to 3 minutes)</i></p>

	<p>PC Darren Wallis gave a brief report on behalf of the Local Police Team. The number of reported crimes continued to be very low in West Hill. Cllrs thanked him for his report.</p> <p>A member of the West Hill Community Speedwatch group appealed to the Council for help in recruiting volunteers to join the group. Volunteers, offering 1 hour a month, would be welcomed.</p> <p>Cllrs and attendees expressed concerns about traffic speeds across the village.</p> <p>Action: To arrange a joint meeting of the West Hill Community Speedwatch group, Parish Council and, if possible, a member of the Local Police team.</p> <p>PC Wallis left the meeting 7.45pm</p>
25/028	District and County Councillors' reports: To receive reports for information (items raised for decision will appear on the agenda for the next meeting) N/A
25/029	To receive Declarations of interest for items on the Agenda and receipt of requests for new Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) dispensations for items on the Agenda. Cllrs FP, TI, AC and SMS each declared no interests in items on the agenda.
25/030	Confidential/exempt items. In consideration of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted): to agree any items to be dealt with after the public and press have been excluded. Proposed items: None
25/031	Minutes: To receive the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 3rd December 2024 (Minute 24/347 -24/374) and to approve the signing of the Minutes by the Chairman as a true record. The minutes of the meeting of 3rd December 2024 were unanimously confirmed as a true record and were signed by the Chairman.
25/032	<p>Planning Applications received: To consider a response to:</p> <p>24/2564/TRE Broad Oak Lodge Ford Lane West Hill T1: Holly - fell. Reason - thin sparse foliage and suppressed form. Cllrs unanimously supported the application</p> <p>25/0019/TRE Land Adjoining West Hayes Eastfield West Hill T1, Birch : dismantle in stages to near ground level. Cllrs unanimously supported the application and asked for a replacement native tree to be planted in the vicinity.</p> <p>The Chairman reported that members of the Council were due to meet with EDDC Tree Officers during January to discuss the TPO and application for treeworks process.</p> <p>To confirm consultee response agreed under delegated powers:</p> <p>23/1143/MFUL Land at Windmill Lane. The Council's response to the application was confirmed.</p>
25/033	<p>Planning decisions received for information (*denotes WHPC differed) EDDC Decision</p> <p>24/2464/TRE 7 Heather Grange West Hill EX11 1XZ Withdrawn T1, Pine tree leaning on adjacent tree: fell.</p> <p>24/2377/TRE Elsdon House Elsdon West Hill Withdrawn Silvicultural thinning of various mixed conifers.</p>

	<p>24/2203/TRE The Gables West Hill Road West Hill Ottery St Mary EX11 1UZ T1, Copper Beech</p> <p style="color: red;">All noted</p>	<p>Split Decision</p>
25/034	<p>Planning Matters: To receive a verbal report on the progress of the new East Devon Local Plan. It was reported that EDDC Strategic Planning Committee had agreed the final draft of the Emerging Local Plan at their meeting on 11th December 2024. It was expected that a public consultation on the final draft will take place in February/March 2025.</p>	

WHPC Groups + Initiatives

25/035	<p>Finance Working Group: 2025-26 WHPC Plan + Budget: (paper previously published)</p> <p>1. To approve the budget for 2025-26.</p> <p style="color: red;">Councillors considered a paper published prior to the meeting which set out recommendations by the Finance Working Group. It was noted that there were no changes to the draft budget discussed at the previous meeting. The Chairman noted that it was a tight budget and asked Cllrs for their views. No concerns were raised and Councillors were satisfied that the budget met the Council's needs.</p> <p style="color: red;">It was unanimously resolved to set the 2025-26 budget at £58,767.00.</p> <p>2. To determine the Parish Council Precept Demand for 2025-26.</p> <p style="color: red;">Councillors considered a paper published prior to the meeting. Cllrs shared their different views, including whether to increase the Precept Demand to reflect the 2025-2026 budget.</p> <p style="color: red;">It was resolved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to set the 2024-2025 Precept Demand at £56,875, unchanged from previous years. - to use existing reserves to fund any overspend against budget. <p style="color: red;">Action: Clerk to submit the signed Precept Demand to EDDC.</p> <p>3. To agree an Internal Audit contract.</p> <p style="color: red;">The Parish Council had previously resolved to appoint Penny Clapham as its Internal Auditor for 2024-2025 (Min 24/303, 1st Oct 2024). Cllrs were asked to consider the terms of a contract.</p> <p style="color: red;">It was resolved to accept the terms and the letter of engagement was signed by the Chairman.</p>	
25/036	<p>Village Hall Pedestrian Path Working Group:</p> <p>1. To consider a request to approve amendments to the existing lease on land at the Village Hall.</p> <p style="color: red;">WHPC had received a request from the Village Hall Trustees (VHT) to amend the lease on land at the Village Hall. The lease document provided by Solicitors acting on behalf of the VHT, signed by all parties, had been found to exclude a clause present in the version agreed by all parties. (Ref WHPC Min 24/253, 5th August 2024 meeting). The VHT had confirmed that WHPC would not incur any additional costs associated with the amendment.</p> <p style="color: red;">It was resolved to accept the amendment and to sign a copy of the amended lease for the Councils records.</p> <p style="color: red;">Action: The Clerk to write to the Solicitors acting on behalf of WHPC to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. confirm the decision to accept the amendment b. request they proceed with registration of the lease. c. Advise the VHT Solicitors have agreed to incur costs, if any, related to the amendment. 	

	<p>Action: The Clerk to return the previous, signed lease, to the VHT Solicitors</p> <p>2. Phase1 works: to decide further actions and to approve costs, if considered appropriate.</p> <p>Phase 1 construction works, to prepare the foundations for a section of the pedestrian path were completed on 13th December 2024. Cllr FP presented the contractors invoice to the meeting and explained this was 12% of the sum previously approved by the Council, Min 24/239.</p> <p>It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to approve and to sign the Devon Tarmasters Ltd invoice, £2,036.15+vat - the invoice to be funded from CIL monies, subject to approval by EDDC. <p>Action: The Clerk to confirm the use of CIL monies for the Pedestrian Path project.</p> <p>The meeting discussed further actions:</p> <p>a. Construction of the pedestrian path will require the removal of a section of hedge alongside West Hill Road. Construction will be delayed if birds are found to be nesting in the hedge. To avoid delays the working group had met with Village Hall Trust to discuss options to discourage nesting birds. The Council had also sought the advice of an ecological consultant.</p> <p>The Village Hall Trustees had agreed to works on a section of the hedge: thinning and height reduction. The roadside facing section of the hedge would remain unchanged.</p> <p>It was resolved to arrange for the agreed works to the hedge and to approve a budget up to £250.00+vat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o It was resolved to apply for a Certificate of Lawfulness to confirm phase 1 works were lawful and compliant with the planning approval. o Approve the associated fee, understood to be £146.50. <p>Action: Cllr FP/Clerk to submit an application to EDDC for a Certificate of Lawfulness</p> <p>3. To approve, if considered appropriate, a risk assessment for land at the Village Hall.</p> <p>It was resolved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o to approve a risk assessment (previously published) for the land leased by the Council for the purposes of the construction of a pedestrian path. o to review the risk assessment on an annual basis, or more frequently as required. <p>4. To receive a verbal report Traffic Regulation Order consultation timetable (if available) It was reported that WHPC has not received any information from DCC Highways regarding the TRO process or timetable.</p> <p>Action: The Clerk to seek an update on the TRO for the next meeting.</p>
25/037	<p>Neighbourhood Plan Working Group: To receive a progress report.</p> <p>Cllr AC gave a short report on behalf of the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 4 members of the community had volunteered to join the working group. o The first meeting of the group appointed a Chair and Secretary. o The group had accepted the Terms of Reference set out by the Parish Council. o The meeting had received an overview of the project and had discussed funding available to the project.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Working Group had resolved to seek the (pro-bono) advice of Planning Consultant Paul Weston (PW) and meet with him to help to shape the project and to define a work programme. <p>On behalf of the Parish Council, the Chairman thanked the volunteers for supporting the Council in the important task to develop a Neighbourhood Plan which would help to define the character of the village in future years.</p>
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Other Matters

25/038	<p>To consider actions regarding Assets of Community Value whose registration will expire in 2025: McColls (Morrisons) site + Broadoak Plantation.</p> <p>The Chairman explained that the Community Right to Bid gives community groups a fairer chance to save assets that are important to them. If an owner of a listed asset wants to sell it they have to notify interested parties.</p> <p>The registration of two West Hill sites, previously successfully nominated as Assets of Community Value by the Parish Council, will expire in 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McColls (Morrisons) site (27th April 2025) • Broadoak Plantation (24th August 2025) <p>It was resolved to seek to renew the Asset of Community Value registration for both sites.</p> <p>Action: Clerk/Cllr FP to submit nomination forms and supporting evidence to EDDC.</p> <p>The Chairman explained that EDDC's decision to list the asset (or not) is taken following an eight week public consultation. He encouraged residents to respond.</p>
25/039	<p>To consider the WHPC response, if any, to the following public consultations:</p> <p>a. EDDC: Tree, Hedge & Woodland Strategy (Final draft) Cllrs agreed to respond in support of the strategy. Cllrs expected future planning applications to be assessed against the strategy.</p> <p>Action: Cllr FP to respond on behalf of WHPC.</p> <p>b. Government: Local Audit Reform (deadline 29 January 2025) Cllrs noted the emphasis on reducing audit backlogs. Cllrs agreed a nil response.</p>
25/040	<p>To consider arrangements for WHPC's annual inspection of the playpark.</p> <p>Action: Cllrs AC/TI to conduct the WHPC annual inspection and report findings and recommendations to the next meeting, 4th February 2025.</p>
25/041	<p>To consider arrangements for the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting Thursday 27th March.</p> <p>Cllrs discussed options for a guest speaker for the event. Cllrs were aware of concerns about the planned landline telephone switch from analogue to digital services (deadline 2027). It was agreed to contact BT and arrange for a speaker, if possible.</p>
25/042	<p>To consider the use of CIL monies available for West Hill.</p> <p>It was reported that two tranches of CIL monies were due to expire in 2025. It was agreed to carry forward this item to the next Council meeting if construction of the VH Pedestrian Path did not meet the CIL criteria (ref Agenda Item 24/036).</p>
25/043	<p>To consider correspondence received (if any). N/A</p>
25/044	<p>To note the receipt of Freedom of Information requests and complaint during December and actions taken.</p> <p>The Chairman reported two Freedom of Information requests and one complaint were received during December 2024. All three were processed according to Council Policies and relevant legislation.</p>

	An additional complaint received in December 2024 was processed in January 2025 according to Council Polices and relevant legislation.
25/045	<p>To receive a report from the Parish Clerk. The Clerk's report included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Government had announced a COVID-19 Day of Reflection 2025 will take place on 9 March to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the pandemic and its impact on communities across the UK. Local authorities are encouraged to support the initiative. <p>Action: WHPC to consider what action it can take, if any, at the next scheduled Council meeting, 4th February.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WHPC has received the contractor's 2024-25 invoice for maintenance of the Public Footpaths. However, DCC has not yet processed any of the Town/Parish Council grant applications despite their best efforts. <p>It was resolved to pay the invoice (Garden & Countryside Maintenance Ltd, £313.50+vat) and contact DCC again.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weekly inspections of the playpark had identified a section of rotten timber on the triple swing (a cross brace). The Clerk presented a quotation for repairs and Cllrs were invited to consider whether it was acceptable. Cllrs were keen to ensure that the equipment was safe for use and considered the repair to be cost effective. It was not considered necessary to close the swings in the interim. <p>It was resolved to replace the cross brace and to approve costs, £300.</p>
25/046	<p>To review WHPC's Action Tracker and agree actions as considered appropriate.</p> <p>Cllrs FP/SMS reported on their meeting with a representative of the Tar Barrels Committee to discuss the parking problems experienced in West Hill in 2024. The Committee acknowledged the problems and were looking to make changes for the 2025 event, including the creation of "Clearways". Cllr FP thanked the Committee for their support and co-operation.</p>
25/047	<p>Financial matters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To consider and approve, if appropriate, the Schedule of Payments. Cllrs considered the Schedule of Payments and invoices circulated and published before the meeting. No questions were raised. It was resolved to approve the payments and sign the invoices. 2. To consider and approve, if appropriate, any additional payments presented to the meeting. Cllrs resolved to approve and sign one additional invoice presented to the meeting: - Garden & Countryside Maintenance Ltd, £376.20 3. To receive, if available, monthly Bank Reconciliations and finance trackers. To be presented to the next meeting, 4th February 2025.
25/048	<p>Councillor questions, reports and items for future agenda</p> <p>Each Councillor is requested to use this opportunity to report minor matters of information not included elsewhere on the agenda and to raise items for future agendas. <i>Councillors are respectfully reminded that this is not an opportunity for debate or decision making.</i></p> <p>No matters were raised.</p>
25/049	<p>Next meeting: To confirm arrangements for upcoming WHPC meeting on Tuesday 4th February 2025 7.30pm at the Village Hall</p>

All remaining members of the public left the meeting.

Part A ended 8.50pm

Part B - Confidential/exempt items. In consideration of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted): to agree any items to be dealt with after the public and press have been excluded. **None**

Meeting closed at 8.50pm

Signed

Date