

**WEST HILL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 5th November 2024 AT 7.30pm**

Present:	Chairman Cllr Francis Pullman (FP), Cllr ShirleyMay Saunders (SMS), Cllr Trevor Ingram (TI)
In attendance:	Anne Oliver Parish Clerk, DCC/EDDC Cllr Jess Bailey (JB), 3 members of the public.
Apologies	Cllr Ann Cooper (AC)

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council

Item (a)	Discussion and decisions (b)
24/321	<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"> • On Remembrance Sunday, 10th November, a short service and wreath laying will take place at the War Memorial at 10.15am. Followed by a Church service at St Michael's at 11.00am. School Lane and a section of West Hill Road will be closed from 9.30am to 11.00am. <p>The two minute silence at 11.00am on Monday 11th November, will be observed at the War Memorial.</p> <p>All of the remembrance events are open to the public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is anticipated that the External Auditor will soon complete their review of the objections submitted against the Council's Annual Return for 2023/24 (Agenda item 24/322). • Ottery St Mary Council have opened a consultation on proposals to enhance the town centre. Details of the proposal and a short survey are available on the Ottery St Mary Council website. The Chairman encourage West Hill residents to submit their views.
24/322	<p>Apologies. To receive apologies and approve reasons for absence, if considered appropriate. Cllr AC's apology and reason for absence were accepted.</p>
24/323	<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>West Hill Footpath Warden, Eileen Perkins gave a short report on West Hill Public Footpaths. DCC's Public Right of Way team had not yet started repair work on Footpath 1 (off Bendarroch Road).</p> <p>It was reported that the West Hill Arboretum Group had finalised their formal constitution. The Chairman encouraged the group to comment on applications for works on TPO'd trees and to respond directly to EDDC.</p>
24/324	<p>District and County Councillors' reports: To receive reports for information (items raised for decision will appear on the agenda for the next meeting)</p>

	<p>County/District Cllr Jess Bailey (JB) gave an update on the progress of the Emerging East Devon Local Plan. During October EDDC's Strategic Planning Committee had considered sites to be allocated for residential and employment. Two West Hill sites were allocated to the plan: Land to the south of Windmill Lane and Land to the north of Eastfield. Several sites were allocated in Ottery St Mary. It's expected that the Committee will consider the final draft of the Emerging Local Plan on 11th December prior to a further public consultation.</p> <p>She noted that the Committee is expected to consider Settlement Boundaries (formerly Built Up Area Boundaries), including West Hill, at their meeting on 22nd November.</p> <p>Action: Members of WHPC to meet with Cllr JB to review the papers published for the EDDC Strategic Planning Committee meeting, 22nd October 2024.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Cllr JB for her tireless work on behalf of West Hill.</p>
<p>24/325</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Members are also reminded that any change to their Declaration of Interests must be notified to the Monitoring Officer at East Devon District Council within 28 days of the change.</p> <p>Cllrs FP, TI and SMS each declared no interests in items on the agenda.</p>
<p>24/326</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>24/327</p>	<p>Minutes: To receive the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 1st October 2024 (Minute 24/292 -24/320) and to approve the signing of the Minutes by the Chairman as a true record.</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of 1st October 2024 were unanimously accepted as a true record and were signed by the Chairman.</p>
<p>24/328</p>	<p>Planning Applications received: To consider a response to: 24/0366/VAR Rockbeare Hill Quarry Rockbeare Exeter EX5 2HB Variation of additional condition added (by NMA dated 26 January 2024) to planning permission 16/1464/MFUL to allow the use of the building for operations falling under Use Class B2 General Industry and/or B8 Storage and Distribution Use. Variation of condition 4 of planning permission 16/1464/MFUL to vary the approved drainage strategy.</p> <p>Councillors upheld their previous comments and strongly objected to the application. Cllrs were concerned about two main aspects of the requested change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal to include Class B2 in the permitted use of the larger new factory building could lead to use of the site for storage and distribution and associated increase in the road traffic using the facility and the B3180. Cllrs welcomed the possible increase in local employment, however they were concerned that it may also lead to more road traffic as there is no sustainable transport to access the site. • Councillors noted the risk of possible flooding as the Environment Agency commented that the proposed change to the drainage strategy was not a sustainable solution. <p>24/2095/TRE 10 Warren Park West Hill Ottery St Mary EX11 1TN T1 - Cherry, dismantle in sections to near ground level.</p> <p>Councillors were unclear about the reason for the request to dismantle the tree as information provided in the application form appeared to be contradictory. Councillors were unclear whether the tree is in terminal decline or whether it is recoverable.</p>

	<p>Councillors were unable to make an objective decision as it was felt that they did not have enough information. Cllrs resolved to defer to the EDDC Tree Officer's decision. It was suggested that if the tree is removed consideration could be given to planting a native tree as a replacement.</p> <p>24/2203/TRE The Gables West Hill Road West Hill EX11 1UZ T1, Copper Beech: crown thinning, removing up to 20% of the foliar area to allow dappled light through the canopy; to also reduce extended vertical leaders to tie in with the main canopy, as per annotated photograph attached, removing up to 3m branch ends and making target pruning cuts of up to 40mm.</p> <p>Councillors were concerned that the description of the work appeared to be more significant than the proposed work illustrated in the submitted photograph. Councillors were also unclear about how this species of tree responds to such pruning. Because the tree is a large, imposing and attractive part of the landscape they were concerned that no permanent damage should occur to the tree.</p> <p>Councillors considered the reason given for the works "to allow dappled light through the canopy" did not justify the extensive works which may adversely impact on the tree,</p> <p>The council did not support the proposed works but resolved to defer to the decision of the EDDC Tree Officers.</p> <p>24/0047/TPO Land North of Woodbines, Ford Lane, West Hill</p> <p>Action: To write to EDDC Tree Officers in support of the TPO.</p> <p>To confirm the consultee response made under Delegated Powers: 24/2028/TRE The Vicarage Bendarroch Road West Hill Ottery St Mary – Object The Council's consultee response was confirmed.</p>																		
24/329	<p>Planning decisions received for information (*denotes WHPC differed) : All noted</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 85%;"></th> <th style="text-align: right; width: 15%;">EDDC Decision</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>24/1864/TRE Hawkins Cottage Hawkins Lane Ottery St Mary EX11 1XG T1, T2 & T3 (English Oaks): Various tree works</td> <td style="text-align: right;">Decided</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24/1793/TRE Birchbank Cottages Lower Broad Oak Road EX11 1XH Various treeworks</td> <td style="text-align: right;">Approved</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24/1579/VAR Little Glade West Hill Road EX11 1TU Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) on planning permission 21/2989/FUL (erection of a single replacement two-storey dwelling) to allow alterations to the fenestration, driveway, and infilling of covered parking area to create a home gym</td> <td style="text-align: right;">Approved</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24/1555/FUL Mulberry House Higher Broad Oak Road EX11 1XJ Construction of a first floor side extension and detached garage with alterations to fenestrations</td> <td style="text-align: right;">Approved</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24/1494/FUL Merrow Cottage Hawkins Lane EX11 1XG Proposed construction of single storey front extension</td> <td style="text-align: right;">Approved</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24/1153/FUL Tale End Toadpit Lane West Hill Ottery St Mary EX11 1TR Proposed single storey garage/carport, conversion of the existing coach house and link extension between the coach house and main house</td> <td style="text-align: right;">Approved</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24/0829/FUL Lower Church Mead Toadpit Lane West Hill Devon EX11 1TR Demolition of existing garage, construction of new garage and residential annexe</td> <td style="text-align: right;">Approved</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Planning Appeal: APP/U1105/W/24/3338889 23/2535/PIP Land Adjacent Elsdon House: Permission in principle for the demolition of an existing greenhouse and the construction of two dwellings</td> <td style="text-align: right;">Inspector Decision: Appeal Dismissed</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		EDDC Decision	24/1864/TRE Hawkins Cottage Hawkins Lane Ottery St Mary EX11 1XG T1, T2 & T3 (English Oaks): Various tree works	Decided	24/1793/TRE Birchbank Cottages Lower Broad Oak Road EX11 1XH Various treeworks	Approved	24/1579/VAR Little Glade West Hill Road EX11 1TU Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) on planning permission 21/2989/FUL (erection of a single replacement two-storey dwelling) to allow alterations to the fenestration, driveway, and infilling of covered parking area to create a home gym	Approved	24/1555/FUL Mulberry House Higher Broad Oak Road EX11 1XJ Construction of a first floor side extension and detached garage with alterations to fenestrations	Approved	24/1494/FUL Merrow Cottage Hawkins Lane EX11 1XG Proposed construction of single storey front extension	Approved	24/1153/FUL Tale End Toadpit Lane West Hill Ottery St Mary EX11 1TR Proposed single storey garage/carport, conversion of the existing coach house and link extension between the coach house and main house	Approved	24/0829/FUL Lower Church Mead Toadpit Lane West Hill Devon EX11 1TR Demolition of existing garage, construction of new garage and residential annexe	Approved	Planning Appeal: APP/U1105/W/24/3338889 23/2535/PIP Land Adjacent Elsdon House: Permission in principle for the demolition of an existing greenhouse and the construction of two dwellings	Inspector Decision: Appeal Dismissed
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	<p>A member of the public joined the meeting at 20.05hrs</p> <p>Standing Orders were suspended:</p> <p>The Chairman invited a member of the public to speak. It was suggested that the Council and village groups could work together to consider establishing a village community transport scheme (perhaps an electric vehicle) to improve access to village group meetings/events, local services and more.</p> <p>Councillors welcomed the proposal and noted that such a scheme may be of benefit across the community.</p> <p>Action: The Chairman and resident to prepare an outline proposal for future consideration.</p> <p>Standing Orders were resumed. A member of the public left the meeting at 20.15hrs</p>
24/330	<p>Planning Matters:</p> <p>1. To receive a verbal report on the EDDC Planning Committee consideration of applications: 23/1143/MFUL Land south of Windmill Lane + 23/0727/MOUT Land north of Eastfield</p> <p>Cllr FP represented WHPC at the October meeting of the EDDC Planning Committee to speak against the Officer's recommendation to approve both applications. Cllr FP raised concerns about surface water flooding and urged the Committee to consider the potential impact should <u>both</u> applications be approved. He thanked residents who also spoke at the meeting.</p> <p>The Committee, following a long discussion, did not approve application 23/1143/MFUL. The Committee asked for the developer to reconsider the number of homes on the site as they considered the proposal could lead to over-development.</p> <p>The Committee confirmed their approval of 23/0727/MOUT Land north of Eastfield subject to a s106 agreement.</p> <p>2. Emerging East Devon Local Plan: To receive a report on EDDC's Strategic Planning Committee Meeting held on 23rd and 29th October to consider site allocations for Ottery St Mary, West Hill and surrounding areas.</p> <p>See agenda item 24/324. Councillors made no further comments.</p>

WHPC Groups + Initiatives

24/331	<p>Remembrance Service Working Group: To consider arrangements for the Remembrance Service on Sunday 10th November 2024.</p> <p>Cllrs noted that the on-site road closure notices were in place as required and it was confirmed arrangements for the road closure were in place.</p>
24/332	<p>HR+ Policy Working Group: To receive a report on the national pay award for the Local Government sector and the Clerk's salary.</p> <p>The meeting considered a paper circulated prior to the meeting. The national pay award, effective from 1st April 2024 had been agreed and a flat increase of £1,290 applied to most salary scales. The impact on the Clerk's salary and backdated pay were noted.</p> <p>The meeting also noted the future changes to National Insurance announced by the Government.</p>
24/333	<p>Village Hall Pedestrian Path Working Group:</p> <p>1. To consider arrangements for phase 1 construction works and to approve associated costs.</p>

	<p>2. To receive a verbal report on DCC Highways matters including (Traffic Regulations Order + s278 agreement) and to decide actions and costs, considered appropriate.</p> <p>A member of the public left the meeting at 8.30pm.</p> <p>The Chairman gave a progress report:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Council's application to DCC Highways for a Traffic Regulations Order (TRO) had been submitted. It was not known when the associated public consultation would take place. Until the TRO had been approved no work on West Hill Road could take place. b. The Council has previously considered that works on the village hall site would not take place until the TRO was approved. c. As the planning approval for the scheme would expire in January 2025 the Working Group had met with an EDDC Planning Officer to discuss what was required to preserve the permission. It was proposed to dig a trench on the village hall site for the foundations of a section of the path. For safety purposes the trench would be backfilled with aggregates and surrounded by barriers. No work would be undertaken on the boundary hedge. It had been confirmed that no tree protection or ecology measures were required for these phase 1 works. d. Phase 1 works were scheduled for December 2024. The playpark will be temporarily closed whilst work is underway, (1 day). e. It was confirmed that WHPC could deposit a s278 cash bond with DCC Highways. f. The previous Council meeting had resolved to appoint a Solicitor to act on the Council's behalf regarding a s278 legal agreement with DC Highways (ref 24/305). The Working Group sought approval for additional budget as per the quote received. <p>It was resolved to increase the approved budget for s278 legal costs from up to £1,000 to £1,800+vat.</p>
<p>24/334</p>	<p>Finance Working Group</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023-24: To receive the findings of the External Auditor (if available) regarding the challenge to the Council's Annual Return (AGAR) for 2023-24. <p>The meeting received an update on the challenge made against the WHPC Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The Parish Council had received a copy of a letter to the Objector in which the External Auditor set out their decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 of the 7 identified objections were ineligible as they didn't relate to the Annual Return. • The 7th objection was considered eligible as it related to Annual Return. However, the Auditor set out the reason why it was not accepted for investigation. <p>The Chairman noted that the Auditor's final report and certificate, once received, would be brought to a future meeting together with their invoice. This would include additional fees of £1,065.00+vat for the work to process the challenge.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked the Clerk for her work in support of maintaining good controls and good governance of the Parish Council.</p> <p>A member of the public left the meeting 8.32pm</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> b. To receive a Draft Financial Report for 1st Half 2024-2025 and to agree actions. <p>The meeting received a financial report on the first six months of the Council's year. Key points included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Income: £57,735 received including the full year precept of £56,875 plus interest and small grants awards. Further Community Infrastructure (CIL) Monies are expected in the coming weeks b. Operational expenditure to 30th September 2024 £21,103: The Finance Working Group forecast an underspend of £5,000 (approx.) at the year.

c. Reserves: as planned, the Council has used earmarked reserves to fund progress of the village path and CIL monies (replacement playpark benches).

No questions were raised and the report was accepted.

It was resolved to publish the report on the Council's website.

c. To receive the Chairman's Draft Report for 1st Half 2024-2025 and to agree actions.

The meeting received the Chairman's report for the first six months of the Council's year. Key points included:

- a. Work has begun on an Emergency Plan for West Hill supported by members of the community.
- b. The project to construct a new pedestrian path to the village hall has made significant progress and was ready to start construction subject to the approval of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). DCC Highways have not provided an estimated completion date for the TRO.
- c. The External Auditor completed their consideration of the challenge to WHPC's Annual Return for 2022-23. WHPC was not required to take any actions.
- d. The Council has continued to monitor and respond, on behalf of the West Hill community, to EDDC's progress towards a new Local Plan for East Devon.
- e. "Business As Usual" including the consideration of many planning applications has continued to keep the Council busy.

The Chairman highlighted the shortage of Councillors as the biggest challenge to the progress of the Council. With three out of seven Councillor vacancies there was a limit to what the Council could undertake. Also there continued to be a risk that a Council meeting could be inquorate and unable to meet.

No questions were raised and the report was accepted.

It was resolved to publish the report on the Council's website.

d. To consider a draft budget for 2025-26 and to agree actions/amendments.

The meeting received a report from the Finance Working Group on the development of a budget for 2025-26. Each line of the current budget had been reviewed to produce a first draft budget. Key points included:

- The group had made prudent assumptions on inflation/price rises and would re-work the budget following the recent budget announcements.
- The provisional budget assumed the Councillor vacancies were filled and additional training costs included.
- The budget reflected known commitments such as the 2025 Lengthsman Contract.
- The provisional total for 2025-26 operational costs showed a slight increase.

No questions or concerns were raised.

Action: The Finance Working Group to present a 2nd draft budget for considerations at the next Council meeting. During the meeting Councillors would be asked to confirm the 2025/6 projects and funding requirements.

e. To consider the WHPC CIL schedule and agree actions considered appropriate.

It was noted that £1,826.34 Community Infrastructure (CIL) monies are due to expire in April 2025. If unspent the monies should be returned to EDDC.

Action: Cllrs to consider how the monies could be used for the benefit of the community, subject to the constraints of the CIL scheme. Proposals will be considered at the December Council meeting.

24/335	<p>Emergency Plan Working Group: To note the receipt of a grant award of £250 from Devon Communities Together.</p> <p>Cllrs noted the Council successful grant applications and the receipt of a £250 grant award: a contribution towards the distribution of an Emergency Plan Booklet.</p>
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Other Matters

24/336	<p>To consider a response to:</p> <p>a. Ottery St Mary Town Council public consultation: proposed town centre improvements.</p> <p>Several WHPC Cllrs attended a public session at the offices of Ottery St Mary Town Council (OSMTC) to view proposals for improvements to the Town Centre. A public consultation on the proposals will be open until 17th November 2024.</p> <p>The Chairman congratulated OSMTC on the initiative and encouraged individual Cllrs and West Hill residents to give their views. Details of the proposals and a short questionnaire can be found on the OSMTC website www.otterystmary-tc.gov.uk</p> <p>b. DCC's public consultation: Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).</p> <p>Cllrs discussed a response to a Devon County Council public consultation. The consultation invited comments on proposed improvements to 10 walking and cycling routes, including Route 8: Otter Trail (Feniton to Sidmouth). Councillors noted that proposals for the Otter Trail had been in the public domain since approximately 2000, including various feasibility studies, appraisal papers and campaign groups. A feasibility study for the complete route was developed and published by Sustrans in April 2014.</p> <p>Action: Cllr FP to respond to the consultation on behalf of WHPC in support of the Otter Trail and to request a walking/cycling link from West Hill to join the proposed route. The deadline for responses was Saturday 30 November 2024</p>
24/337	<p>To consider a grant application received from West Hill Village Hall Trustees for a contribution towards the cost of new fencing for the pre-school play area.</p> <p>Standing Orders were suspended:</p> <p>The Chairman of the Village Hall Trustees, Colin Veale, spoke in support of the grant application. The Trustees were responding to a request from West Hill Pre-School to increase the height of the fencing surrounding the outdoor play area for safety purposes. The Pre-School and the Village Hall Trust are charitable concerns.</p> <p>A quote, £800, for the additional fence and to re-locate a gate had been received.</p> <p>Standing Orders were resumed.</p> <p>Councillors noted the requested grant award, £800, exceeded 50% of the total cost of the project, contrary to the Council's policy. Cllr TI felt that the request be paid in full if a contributing factor was the increased number of passers-by due to the new access onto West Hill Road. Cllrs SMS and FP noted that WHPC had only £1,072.18 grant funds remaining for 5 months of the Council year.</p> <p>It was resolved to make a grant award of £400 to the Village Hall Trust.</p>
24/338	<p>To consider arrangements for the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting.</p> <p>It was resolved to hold the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting on Thursday 27th March 2025, 7.30pm at the Village Hall.</p>

	<p>Action: Councillors to bring proposals for the Annual Parish Meeting agenda for consideration at the December Council meeting.</p>
24/339	<p>To consider a subscription renewal to Breakthrough Communications.</p> <p>It was resolved not to renew the subscription as similar support was available via the Council's retained solicitor advice scheme.</p> <p>DCC/EDDC Cllr JB left the meeting 9.20pm</p>
24/340	<p>To consider correspondence received: No matters for consideration.</p>
24/341	<p>To consider the purchase of a replacement laptop for the Clerk.</p> <p>The Chairman explained the Clerk's current laptop, purchased in 2020/21, was becoming out of date and required replacement. Cllrs unanimously supported the proposal and to retain the current laptop as a reserve device.</p> <p>It was resolved to purchase a replacement laptop and to approve a budget up to £1,500+vat.</p> <p>Action: The Finance WG to provide for the replacement of the current printer and projector in the 2nd draft budget for 2025/26.</p> <p>A member of the public left the meeting 9.30pm</p>
24/342	<p>To receive a report from the Parish Clerk: It was reported:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Devon Community Together are offering Community Energy Advice sessions Action: The Clerk to contact DCT to organise an event for West Hill. b. The Government has opened a consultation on remote attendance at a Council meeting. Action: The Clerk to include an agenda item (December) for consideration of the Council's response to the consultation. c. WHPC received £5, 592.85 Community Infrastructure monies in October 2024. d. A new VAS transfer schedule is required before 2nd December 2024. Action: Cllr TI to update the Lengthsman's VAS schedule. e. The WHPC newsletter and Emergency Plan brochure will be distributed from Saturday 9th November. Councillors thanked "West Hill Posties" for their excellent response and support.
24/343	<p>To review WHPC's Action Tracker: The Chairman led a review of the outstanding actions. No further actions were identified.</p>
24/344	<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 approved and signed three additional invoices presented to the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tozers - subscription Council Legal Advice Service £600.00 West Hill Village Hall - Room hire in October £23.25 Voicehost - landline (monthly) £2.03 3. To receive, if available, monthly Bank Reconciliations and finance trackers. All noted. No comments or questions were raised.

24/345	<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 style="color: red;">Cllr TI asked for the next meeting to include an agenda item for consideration of the WHPC grant policy.</p>
24/346	<p>Next meeting: To confirm arrangements for upcoming WHPC meeting on Tuesday 3rd December 2024 7.30pm at the Village Hall</p>

Part A ended 9.55pm

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 9.55pm.

Signed

Date