

**WEST HILL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 7th November 2023 AT 7.30PM**

Present:	Chairman Cllr Alison Carr (AC), Cllr Neil Bromley (NB), Cllr Stanley Paulo (SP) Cllr Andrew Gorton (AG), Francis Pullman (FP), Cllr Trevor Ingram (TI)
In attendance:	Anne Oliver Parish Clerk, DCC/EDDC Cllr Jess Bailey, 7 members of the public attended the meeting.
Absent	n/a

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council

Item (a)	Discussion and decisions (b)
23/331	<p>Welcome and Chairmans announcements: The meeting started at 7.30pm. The Chairman, Cllr AC, welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a short update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Parish Council has 1 remaining vacancy. If a resident is interested in becoming a Councillor they are asked to contact the Clerk or a Councillor for more information. - The public consultation on WHPC's application for the designation of a new Neighbourhood Area closed on 30th October. The Parish Council anticipates the application will be approved by EDDC. (Please see 23/341 For further information). - The Village Hall will host their annual village panto, Jack and the Beanstalk, on Friday 15th December at 6pm. Tickets are being sold at the Primary School, the Preschool, the Post Office at Morrisons. - The Annual Remembrance Sunday events on 12th November will begin with a short wreath laying service at the War Memorial (10.15am) followed by a Remembrance Service at St Michael's (10.45am). All are welcome. School Lane and a section of West Hill Road will be closed from 9.30-11.00am to enable the service to take place. - An amended planning application 23/1143/MFUL for Land South of Windmill Lane has recently been submitted to EDDC
23/332	<p>Apologies. To receive apologies and approve reasons for absence. N/A</p>
23/334	<p>At the Chairman's discretion this item was brought forward on the agenda.</p> <p>To receive District and County Councillors' reports for information (items raised for decision will appear on the agenda for the next meeting).</p> <p>DCC/EDDC Cllr Jess Bailey (JB) gave a short report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDDC's Planning Committee voted to approve planning application 23/0727/MOUT for land north of Eastfield. Cllr Bailey expressed her disappointment with this decision and stated this was a reflection of EDDC's inability to demonstrate a 5 Year Housing Supply. • The Planning Inspectorate have not yet issued a start date for the appeal submitted by Morrish Homes regarding their planning application (Oak Road 22/2533/MOU). • Ottery St Mary Town Council has been successful in applying to DCC Highways for a 20mph scheme. • Recently, the Police joined the West Hill Community Speedwatch team to monitor traffic on the B3180. Within an hour session the Police took action on 19 speeding vehicles. • Cllr JB will ask the Devon County Council (DCC) Public Rights of Way team to re-visit Footpath 6 (off Bendarroch Road) to assess barbed wire and padlock on a gate. • Cllr Bailey was please to be joined by representatives of WHPC at a recent East Devon Flood Resilience meeting.

23/333

Public question time (3 minutes)

From 7.30pm residents are invited to give their views and question 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. *Individual contributions are limited to 3 minutes.*

This item includes issues submitted to the Clerk prior to the meeting.

Several members of the public spoke during the session:

- West Hill Footpath Warden Eileen Perkins reported the presence of a lock on a gate on Public Footpath 6 (off Bendarroch Road) which made the path impassable. This had been reported to the DCC Public Rights Of Way (PROW) team as the relevant authority. Standing Orders were suspended: DCC Cllr JB understood that it was possible to move the lock/chain to gain access to the path. A DCC PROW Officer would be re-visiting the footpath. Standing Orders were resumed.
- A resident referred to questions previously raised at the 20th July Council meeting and made further statements/questions regarding defibrillators and the WHPC Chairman. The resident was advised that matters concerning the installation of a defibrillator at the Village Hall should be referred to the Village Hall Trustees.
- A resident queried the deadline for responses to the recently amended planning application 23/1143/MFUL Land South of Windmill Lane. The resident noted that 58 new documents had been posted and the public should be allowed more time to review the new material. A deadline of sixteen days was insufficient. Standing Orders were suspended: DCC Cllr JB advised that she would contact EDDC to request an extended deadline. Standing Orders were resumed.
- The resident also queried the Parish Council's response to planning application 23/0727/MOUT. The Council had asked for a pedestrian path to be included in future plans should the application be approved by EDDC. This was considered detrimental to the consideration of planning application 23/1143/MFUL Land to the South of Windmill Lane. Cllr AC commented:
 - it was common practice to request a condition to be made should the application be approved. Requesting a new path, or such, needed to be made at an early stage of the planning process as it was unlikely to be actioned at a later stage when detailed designs have been completed. Should application 23/1143/MFUL be approved the path would provide a through route from Bendarroch Road to Eastfield.
 - Making the request would not prejudice consideration of another application as each application is considered on its own merits.

The Clerk read out questions submitted in advance of the meeting and noted the resident had requested anonymity.

The Chairman noted the Parish Council is not obliged to respond to questions at the meeting, particularly where the resident has stated that they wish to remain anonymous. She commented "this is unfair on those who have taken the time to attend the Council meeting to ask questions in person, and who - because they are standing up in a public gallery - are not able to claim anonymity. Transparency is important and should apply to everyone.

The Chairman stated "On this occasion, I will answer these questions briefly:

1. What has the Chairman personally achieved...? I inherited a dysfunctional Council after the May election which, due to the resignation of one of the three elected Cllrs, became inquorate. I have spent the last 6 months rebuilding the Council with four new members from a variety of professional backgrounds, none of whom had previous Council experience. The newly co-opted members have attended induction and training in Council responsibilities and team working, and action planning. The Council is now in a good position going forward.
2. What has the Parish Council achieved...? The Parish Council's actions over the last 6 months are recorded in the Minutes of meetings for residents to read.
3. With the substantial reserves built up, is the Council considering a substantial reduction in the Precept for 2024/25? Cllrs are acutely aware of their responsibilities regarding the use

	<p>of public money and responsible financial planning. The 24/25 precept will be agreed at the December meeting and residents informed accordingly. It is not good practice to build up reserves for no reason but it is good practice to plan for specific projects.</p> <p>4. Will members of the community be involved in developing an Emergency Plan for West Hill? The development of the Emergency Plan for the village will involve external authorities, village organisations and the wider West Hill community.</p> <p>I will not provide a full written response to the resident as requested. Instead, I will propose at the next meeting that a half-year review is published on our website for everyone to read.</p> <p>The Parish Council encourage residents to attend Council meetings and welcomes feedback. Thank you to those members of the public present here tonight. However, I propose the Parish Council reviews current its policies regarding public participation at meetings and whether a policy needs to be developed to consider how anonymous questions in the public forum are dealt with in the interests of transparency.”</p> <p>Cllr FP’s comments included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You’ve rather understated your contribution. - To have built a team is rather an achievement. - The training and induction for co-opted Cllrs has been extremely well done. Thank you. <p>Cllr AC thanked him for his comments.</p> <p>Standing Orders were suspended: A member of the public thanked everyone on the Council for their work. Other residents also expressed their thanks. Further comments included “anything anonymous should be ignored”. Standing Orders were resumed.</p> <p>DCC/EDDC Cllr JB and two members of the public left the meeting 8.02pm.</p>
23/335	<p>Declarations of Interest: Under the Localism Act 2011 (sections 26-37 and Schedule 4) and in accordance with the Council’s Code of Conduct, members are required to declare any interests that are not currently entered in the Member’s register of interests including the nature and extent of such interests they may have, in items to be considered at this meeting. 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. Also, receipt of requests for dispensations for new Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Registerable Interests or Non-Registerable Interests for items on the Agenda.</p> <p>Cllr FP advised that he had recently updated his Register of Interests and declared no Interests in items on the agenda. Cllr TI declared an Interest in agenda item 23/341-2 as a resident of the Eastfield area but proposed to participate in that item as it was for update only. Cllrs agreed. Cllrs NB, SP, FP, AC declared no interests on items on the agenda.</p>
22/336	<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.</p> <p>To consider, if appropriate, any agenda items should be considered in Part B.</p> <p>N/A</p>
23/337	<p>Minutes: To receive the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 3rd October 2023 (Minute 23/304-23/330) and to approve the signing of the Minutes by the Chairman as a true record.</p> <p>The minutes were unanimously accepted as a true record by those Cllrs present at the meeting (Cllrs AC, SP, NB, FP, AG) and were signed by the Chairman.</p>
23/338	<p>Planning Applications received: To consider and agree a response to:</p> <p>a. 23/2199/FUL Fir Grove Lower Broad Oak Road EX11 1UF Applicant Mr Moul Proposed front north/east elevation single storey extension.</p> <p>Cllrs considered the application and raised no objections.</p>

	<p>b. 23/2250/TRE Grasmere West Hill Road EX11 1UZ Applicant Mr & Mrs Milton T1 Beech: Reduce canopy</p> <p style="color: red;">Cllrs considered the application and noted an earlier application 23/0959/TRE had been refused. They noted the current application proposed works on a reduced scale. This was considered to be reasonable tree management. Cllrs raised no objections and supported the application.</p> <p style="color: red;">Cllrs noted the recent receipt of an amended application 23/1143/MFUL for Land South of Windmill Lane and agreed to ask EDDC for an extended response deadline to allow the Council and public sufficient time to consider 58 new supporting documents. Cllrs resolved to hold an Extraordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 21st November if an extended deadline wasn't granted.</p>
<p>23/339</p>	<p>EDDC Planning Decisions: received for information (*denotes WHPC differed)</p> <p>23/2011/TRE 10 Perrys Gardens West Hill EX11 1XA Status: Withdrawn Excavation into raised ground level (and possibly into root protection area of woodland order 23/0006/TPO); extending rear patio area by up to 5m in distance.</p> <p>23/1862/FUL 5 Eymore Drive EX11 1UN Status: Approved Construction of single storey rear extension.</p> <p>23/1814/TRE Springfield House West Hill Road EX11 1UZ Status: Approved T1, oak - remove lowest first order branch on west side over garden. T2, sycamore - remove lowest first order branch on west side over garden.</p> <p>23/1721/TRE Maybury Bendarroch Road EX11 1UW Status: Approved T1, Oak: Remove approximately 30% of the foliage area of the tree by via thinning.</p> <p>23/1237/FUL Franton Higher Broad Oak Road EX11 1XJ Status: Approved* Construction of single storey side extensions and double garage with first floor accommodation. Re-position of driveway/parking area including re-build of existing garage to entertainment area.</p> <p style="color: red;">Cllrs noted the EDDC decisions.</p>
<p>23/340</p>	<p>To receive notifications of Tree Preservation Orders: 23/0048/TPO Land at Belbury Close, School Lane Cllrs noted the new TPO and resolved to write to the Tree Officers in support of the TPO.</p>
<p>23/341</p>	<p>Planning Matters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbourhood Plan: To receive an update on the Council's application for the Designation of a Neighbourhood Area for West Hill. The public consultation on WHPC's application for the designation of a new Neighbourhood Area closed on 30th October. EDDC's Planning Officer had advised that 5 public comments had been received (all in support) and 5 Consultee responses had been received (all neutral). The Chairman anticipated the application will be approved by EDDC during the coming weeks. To receive a verbal update from the EDDC Planning Committee 24th October 2023 re planning application 23/0727/MOUT Land north of Eastfield. EDDC's Planning Committee considered the application and the Planning Team's recommendation for approval. District Cllr Jess Bailey and 1 member of the public spoke to object to the application. Cllr AC explained that WHPC was unable to send a representative due to prior commitments, however WHPC's statement (object) was read out at the Committee meeting. Cllrs were disappointed with the Committee's decision to approve the application but were pleased that the Committee accepted the WHPC request for a new pedestrian path to be included in the detailed design. Cllrs shared Cllr Bailey's concerns regarding EDDC's inability to demonstrate a 5 Year Housing supply, as this tilts the balance in favour of development.

	<p>3. To receive an update on Emerging East Devon Local Plan: Strategic Planning Committee meeting 31st October (if available).</p> <p>Cllr AC commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EDDC Strategic Planning Committee discussed a timetable for delivery of the Emerging Local plan and considered it to be very tight particularly with the lack of resources in the Planning team. - The Committee noted that other District Councils had challenge their Housing Targets (set by Central Government). Also, the Committee noted that EDDC had written to MPs to challenge the method for calculating the Housing Target. Further details are available on the EDDC website. <p>Also, Town/Parish Councils have been invited to complete a Neighbourhood Plan Intentions survey. WHPC's Planning Working Group was asked to draft a response to be considered at the December Council meeting.</p> <p>4. To consider Devon County Council Highways response, if available, to concerns expressed by WHPC regards their understanding of facilities/infrastructure available in West Hill (ref planning application 23/1581/OUT Land at Little Orchard, West Hill Road).</p> <p>Cllr AC reported that she had received an acknowledgement from DCC Highways but was awaiting a response.</p>
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WHPC Groups + Initiatives

23/342	<p>To consider:</p> <p>a. Draft Action Plan for 2023-2024/2027</p> <p>Cllrs considered a paper circulated for the meeting which summarised the output of a series of informal Cllr workshops held during October. At the workshops Cllrs began to prepare an action plan by considering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - activities that WHPC undertakes as 'business as usual' - other in-progress projects, initiatives and commitments - sharing their views and suggestions for activities the Council could undertake. - the resources and working groups required to deliver it mindful of the limited Cllr and Clerk resources available. <p>It was resolved:</p> <p>a. To confirm the Council's Vision: Working with the community to maintain and enhance West Hill's special character.</p> <p>b. To confirm the Council's Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To maintain and enhance the built environment for present and future generations. - To maintain and enhance the natural environment for present and future generations. - To improve safety, including road safety, by working with residents and relevant agencies. - To maintain and develop infrastructure and key facilities and other services that enhance the quality of life in the village. - To support and engage with all sectors of the community. - To provide effective, efficient and accountable local government for the Parish. <p>c. To confirm WHPC projects to be progressed in addition to "Business As Usual" activities:</p> <p>Ongoing projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with the West Hill Village Hall Trustees to create a new pedestrian access to the Village Hall from West Hill Road.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage with the EDDC Emerging East Devon Local Plan review to represent the views of village residents. <p>New projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seek to reduce speed limits to 20mph throughout the village. - Review and enhance playpark provision. - Develop an Emergency Plan for West Hill (Basic). - Apply for Local Council Award Scheme (Foundation Level) accreditation. <p>On hold: To Progress the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for West Hill</p> <p>d. To establish Working Groups and/or Task + Finish Groups to support BAU and projects: Finance, HR+Policy, Village Hall Path, Planning, Road Safety, Emergency Plan, Playpark.</p> <p>e. To continue representation on external bodies: Airport Executive Committee, Leisure East Devon (Ottery St Mary), Ottery Health Matters, Community Safety Group.</p> <p>Action: The Chairman asked Cllrs to consider, at a future meeting, how the Council would seek community feedback on the proposed plan.</p> <p>Action: Each group was asked to prepare a Terms of Reference for consideration at the December Council meeting. Project timescales and cost estimates would inform budget setting for 2024.25.</p> <p>Financial Report for 1st Half 2023-2024 and a Draft Budget for 2024 -25.</p> <p>Cllrs considered a report prepared for the meeting. The Chairman noted that there were no major issues regarding income and expenditure, however it was expected that the audit budget would be overspent due to additional fees charged by the External Auditor for their work to process an objection to the 2022/23 Annual Return. No concerns or questions were raised by Cllrs.</p> <p>It was resolved to note the 1st Half 2023-2024 Financial Report.</p> <p>Cllrs then considered an indicative 2024-5 WHPC budget. No concerns or questions were raised.</p> <p>Action: The Finance Working Group to prepare a Draft 2024/5 Budget for consideration at the December Council meeting.</p>
<p>23/343</p>	<p>To consider recommendations for the next stage of the Village Hall Pedestrian Link project.</p> <p>Cllrs considered a paper circulated prior to the meeting. The Chairman reported the Village Hall Trustees (VHT) held an Extraordinary meeting to consider WHPC’s request for a lease on a section of the Village Hall land for the construction of a new pedestrian path. The Trustees agreed to grant a lease, subject to approval by the Charities Commission. On behalf of the Parish Council, the Chairman thanked the VHT for their support.</p> <p>It was resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To avoid further delay the Parish Council the Village Hall Trust would not be asked to pursue further grant applications. 2. In principle, WHPC to access S106 monies to fund the project and future maintenance (subject to EDDC approval). 3. WHPC to write to EDDC to request an an up-to-date statement of S106 monies allocated to West Hill. 4. To ask the VHT to seek the Charities Commission’s approval for a lease or such to be granted on the land. 5. In principle, WHPC to seek a lease or such on Village Hall land for the construction of a new pedestrian path to the village hall. 6. Subject to pt 4, WHPC to appoint a solicitor to act in the interests of WHPC in negotiating a lease or such.

	7. Subject to pt 4, to establish a budget of £2.5k to cover legal costs.
23/344	To receive an update on arrangements for Remembrance Service on 12 th November 2023. The Chairman advised that arrangements for the event were in place and the Highways notices for closure of School Lane and part of West Hill Road had been posted as specified. Also, a named First Aider would be present. Cllr FP would represent WHPC at the event as Cllr SP was no longer available.

Other Matters

23/345	<p>Clerks Report: (for information)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cllrs were encouraged to subscribe to the regular bulletins from DCC, EDDC and DALC - Cllr SP will represent WHPC at webinar led by Cllr John Hart, Leader of Devon County Council: DCC Priorities and Budget 2024/5 - Cllr AC will represent WHPC at Devon Communities Together AGM - Cllr AG agreed to take responsibility for the VAS devices and reports. <p>Action Tracker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changes to the Council's mandate for The Cambridge Building Society have been completed. (23/299) - An application to add Cllr FP + AG to the Council's bank mandate have been submitted (23/306)
23/346	To receive a verbal update (if available) on an objection submitted to the External Auditor regarding the 2022-23 Annual Governance and Accounts Return. The Chairman advised no further correspondence had been received.
23/347	<p>To consider arrangements for the appointment of an Internal Auditor for 2023-2024.</p> <p>Cllrs considered a paper setting out the requirements to appoint an Internal Auditor (IA), NALC's best practice guide and details of the IA appointed for 2022/23. Cllrs discussed the key principles of making the appointment: competence and independence from the Council. It was also noted that there is no requirement for the IA to be professionally qualified.</p> <p>The Chairman explained that WHPC had appointed a new auditor 2022/3 and the search for the auditor had taken several months and was very time consuming due to the scarcity of IAs in Devon and nationally. The Chairman recommended the re-appointment of the IA.</p> <p>Cllrs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resolved via a vote to re-appoint Penny Clapham as the Internal Auditor for the 2023-24 financial year (4 in favour, Cllrs TI + FP abstained as they were unfamiliar with the Internal Audit process) - considered her to be competent and independent of the Parish Council - resolved to approve costs of £200. <p>A member of the public left the meeting</p>
23/348	<p>To receive the annual RoSPA playpark inspection report and consider remedial actions, if required.</p> <p>RoSPA's annual inspection of the playpark took place on 27th September 2023. Cllrs considered their report, circulated before the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No matters of serious concern were identified. - All equipment given a risk rating of LOW/VERY Low. <p>Cllrs noted a £100+vat for the inspection and report.</p> <p>Cllrs agreed the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To remind the Lengthsman to avoid strimmer damage. - To consider a protective cover for the wooden uprights on the swing. - To remove splintered timber on the swing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Replace a missing cap on the overhead bars. - To monitor areas of rotten timber on benches.
23/349	<p>To receive an update, if available, on West Hill Public Footpath 6 (Bendarroch Road) The Clerk reported that DCC's Public Rights Of Way (PROW) team had been requested to carry out a site visit following a number of reports of a gate which appeared to be locked. No further update was available.</p>
23/350	<p>To consider a request for Town/Parish Councils to commemorate and celebrate D-Day 80. Cllrs considered the request made to Local Councils to light a beacon on 6th June 2024 to commemorate and celebrate 80th anniversary of D-Day. Those Councils without land or the means to do this were asked to light a lamp of peace.</p> <p>Action: Cllr AC to liaise the West Hill branch of RBL regarding the D-Day 80 events.</p>
23/351	<p>To consider a request for Town/Parish Councils to support the Climate and Ecology Bill, a private members bill before the House of Commons. The Chairman withdrew this item.</p>
23/352	<p>To consider establishing a monthly plan for the Clerk's Mobile Phone. Cllrs considered a paper circulated prior to the meeting. Cllrs considered a contract available from SMARTY to be cost effective (£6 per month, cancel anytime, unlimited calls/texts, wi-fi calling). It was resolved to establish a contract for the Clerk's mobile phone (to be paid by Direct Debit)</p>
23/353	<p>To consider holding the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting on Thursday 18th or 25th April 2024. It was resolved to hold the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting on Thursday 18th April 2024. Action: Clerk to book the the main hall at the Village Hall.</p>
23/354	<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 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. No additional payments were presented for approval. 3. To receive, if available, monthly Bank Reconciliations and finance trackers. The bank reconciliation for September was approved and signed.
23/355	<p>Councillor questions, reports and items for future agenda 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>Cllr AC reported a website issue. The website no longer shows a live Twitter feed due to revised Terms of Use for Twitter. Cllr AC was asked to investigate options and present them to a future Council meeting for consideration.</p> <p>Cllr SP gave an update on his research on a Community Noticeboard. Many different styles of noticeboard were available, finding a suitable site for a noticeboard was proving difficult as WHPC doesn't own any land.</p> <p>Cllr TI gave a brief update on finding an alternative location in the playpark to site the Storytelling Throne and bench. Cllr AC asked Cllrs TI/NB to prepare an options paper for consideration at a future meeting.</p>
23/356	<p>Next meeting: To confirm arrangements for the next WHPC ordinary meeting Tuesday 5th December 7.30pm at the Village Hall.</p>

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. **N/A**

All remaining members of the public left the meeting.
Meeting closed 9.35pm

Signed

Date