

**WEST HILL PARISH COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON 15th Sep 2020 AT 7.30PM**

**\*\* The meeting was held by video-conference due to the Covid-19 situation**

Present:	Chairman Cllr Margaret Hall (MH), Cllr Alison Carr (AC), District Cllr/WHPC Cllr Jessica Bailey (JB), Cllr Della Cannings (DC), Cllr Margaret Piper (MP), Cllr Amanda Townsend (AT), Cllr Alan Cook (ABC)
In attendance:	Anne Oliver Parish Clerk, No members of the public attended the meeting
Apologies received from:	Cllr Margaret Piper (MP),

**AGENDA – ORDINARY MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

Item (a)	Discussion and decisions (b)
20/295	<b>Welcome and Chairman's announcements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The meeting started at 7.30PM. The Chair MH welcomed everyone and reminded everyone that the meeting was being sound recorded.</li> </ul>
20/296	<b>Apologies.</b> To receive apologies and approve reasons for absence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Margaret Piper</li> </ul>
20/297	<b>Public question time (3 minutes)</b> 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. This item included issues submitted to the Clerk prior to the meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No members of the public attended the meeting. No matters were raised</li> </ul>
20/298	<b>District and County Councillors' reports</b> for information (items raised for decision will appear on the agenda for the next meeting) No matters raised
20/299	<b>Declarations of Interest</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Register of Interests: Councillors are reminded of the need to update their register of interests.</li> <li>To declare any personal interests in items on the agenda and their nature. To declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in items on the agenda and their nature (Councillors with DPs must leave the room for the relevant items).            Cllr JB declared a personal interest as an EDDC District Cllr.</li> </ol>
20/300	<b>Confidential/exempt items. In consideration of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960</b> (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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>
20/301	<b>To consider WHPC's response</b> to NALC Planning consultations for the "Changes to the current Planning System" (deadline 17 <sup>th</sup> September 2020): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need</li> <li>securing of First Homes through developer contributions</li> <li>temporarily lifting the small sites threshold</li> </ul> extending the current Permission in Principle to major documents

	<p>Cllrs discussed the proposed changes to the planning system and were keen to submit their views to the Consultation. They considered two papers setting out a draft response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a paper previously circulated by Cllr MH setting out a draft response</li> <li>• EDDC's proposed response to the consultation – to be debated at the EDDC Strategic Planning Committee on 16th September: <a href="https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/documents/s9472/changes%20to%20current%20planning%20system%20Aug%202020%20consultation.pdf">https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/documents/s9472/changes%20to%20current%20planning%20system%20Aug%202020%20consultation.pdf</a></li> </ul> <p>Cllrs did not support the proposed changes and in particular they found the proposed new system for assessing housing need unacceptable: using the proposed formula the housing target for East Devon will rise from the present 900/year to 1614/year – a 67% rise.</p> <p>Cllrs broadly supported the views expressed by EDDC and agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to submit the paper prepared by Cllr MH to NALC as the WHPC response</li> <li>• to make this available on the website. <a href="https://www.westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk/whpc-response-proposed-changes-planning-system-15th-sep-2020">https://www.westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk/whpc-response-proposed-changes-planning-system-15th-sep-2020</a></li> </ul> <p>Cllrs will discuss the White Paper “Planning for the future” at the next WHPC meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> October.</p>
20/302	<p><b>Covid-19: To consider</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The impact of any recent Government Covid-19 announcements. Cllrs noted the recent announcement re “rule of six” restrictions and confirmed that they will continue to follow National Association of Councils recommendation to hold virtual meetings.  They noted the rising number of Covid cases and potential for further restrictions may necessitate the re-launch of the West Hill Parish Council Help Scheme in coming months.</li> <li>2. Feedback from training course: Chairing remote meetings.  Cllrs ABC and AC updated the meeting on their recent training. Cllr AC suggested that WHPC could publish details of the Zoom meeting invitation to make it easier for members of the public to join the meeting. Cllr MH noted that no members of the public had joined a virtual WHPC meeting under the current system. However, a member of the public had regularly joined the Open Spaces Committee.  It was agreed to publish the meeting details for a trial period.</li> <li>3. To receive an update on the WHPC Help Scheme Review  Cllr DC updated the meeting of the survey of Help Scheme users and volunteers which was currently in progress. The survey sought to determine learning points for a re-launch of the Help Scheme if it is required in coming months. A full report will be presented to the WHPC meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> October. Initial findings indicate that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the demand for help with prescription collections will be significantly reduced as many residents are now receiving their prescriptions by mail or delivery.</li> <li>• Residents greatly valued the actions taken by the Parish Council to support the community.</li> <li>• The Council could promote awareness of the WHPC website and Ottery Help Scheme.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

## Committee & Working Groups: Finance Working Group

20/303	<p><b>To approve</b> an initial payment to accompany the application for a Cambridge Building Society Council Saver Account.</p> <p>Cllr AC gave an update on opening of a bank account with Cambridge Building Society (CBS). She advised the meeting that the Council had funds c£117k with Unity Trust bank and recommended a deposit of £50k into the new account. This would leave both holdings under the protection of the FSCS limit. Cllrs agreed unanimously.</p> <p><b>It was resolved</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To deposit £50,000 with the Cambridge Building Society</li> <li>To make an internal transfer of funds with Unity Trust to move £29,000 from the deposit account to the current account to facilitate the deposit to CBS.</li> </ul>
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## Other Matters

20/304	<p><b>To consider</b> a possible Woodland Trust Lease for Broadoak Plantation or other options for WHPC to improve the facilities and management of the woodland.</p> <p>Cllrs devoted most of the meeting to the recent Woodland Trust (WT) proposal for a long term lease arrangement with WHPC for Broadoak Plantation.</p> <p>Papers pre-circulated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion paper</li> <li>Discussion paper - Aims for the WT Land (Cllr ABC)</li> <li>WT Heads of Terms</li> <li>WT Sample lease</li> <li>WT Management Plan for woodland (5yr plan to 2021)</li> </ul> <p><b>Cllr MH summarised the current position:</b></p> <p>West Hill residents currently have access to the woodland and is greatly valued by the community especially dog-walkers. During 2019/2020 the Parish Council liaised with the WT to get permission to install two picnic benches. To date communication with WT has been difficult although now slightly improved but via their contractor Tilhill.</p> <p>Broadoak woodland has been registered as an Asset of Community Value. If WT decide to sell, WHPC has the right to bid (but that bid is not necessarily accepted), and there is a 6 month moratorium on the sale to enable WHPC to prepare a bid.</p> <p>Although the public are allowed free access to the land, there is currently no public right of way through the woodland, and there is also a permissive path across land.</p> <p>The WT have provided Draft Heads of Terms for a lease arrangement, and a standard lease agreement.</p> <p><b>In order to consider the potential of a lease agreement</b> Cllrs agreed to discuss their vision for the woodland and then evaluate the various delivery options available:</p> <p><b><u>Aims/Vision</u></b></p> <p>Cllr MH noted that Cllrs probably had differing visions for the woodland as would residents. Cllrs spent some time discussing their aims for the Woodland:</p> <p><b>Access:</b> Over-riding aim was to ensure long term public access to the woodland.</p>
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**Maintenance:** The woodland is managed to a standard suitable for Public Access  
**Other uses of the Woodland:** To improve bioiversity, education, facilities and usage of the woodland, e.g.

Cllr JB suggested the woodland could be improved to promote greater public use. Cllr ABC expressed concerns that introducing new facilities could be detrimental to the woodland. He believed that the aim should be to maintain the natural woodland. This was the WT basic premise for their woodlands.

### Possible options

Cllrs considered the lease and various alternative options

#### **1. Outright purchase – now, or if WT decide to sell in the future**

Cllr MH noted Broadoak Plantation was now registered as an Asset of Community Value. If WT decide to sell, WHPC has the right to and there is a 6 month moratorium on the sale to enable us to prepare a bid. However the WT is a charity and is bound to get the best offer for the land. The WT could decide to sell the land whether or not WHPC took out on the lease.

Cllrs agreed that an outright purchase would give WHPC complete control over the woodland. Although the restriction of the permissive path would still exist.

Cllrs believed ownership would incur a major financial responsibility for the WHPC for decades to come, particularly in terms of Ash Die Back. Creation of a Management Group and the ongoing maintenance responsibility would require significant expertise and resource. Cllr ABC disagreed that the purchase would impose a significant financial burden on the Council.

Cllrs DC/JB suggested that if the Woodland was offered for sale (at some point in the future) the community may offer their support. Cllr ABC agreed that there would be strong support from the community if there was a risk of losing the amenity.

Cllrs did not support this option and agreed not to seek to purchase the woodland.

#### **2. Lease**

Cllrs considered the possible pros/cons of a lease arrangement. Cllr ABC suggested that a key factor in agreeing a lease would be to agree a better established communication channel. It would also provide greater control over maintenance

Cllrs agreed that the terms set out in the draft Heads of Terms offered little benefit in comparison to the status quo as it requires WHPC to seek permission from WT for any changes, improvements etc as per the current arrangement

Cllrs identified dis-advantages of the lease proposal. They believed the lease would incur a major financial responsibility for the WHPC for decades to come, particularly in terms of As Die Back. Creation of a management group and the ongoing maintenance responsibility would require significant expertise and resource. Cllr ABC disagreed that the purchase would impose a significant financial burden on the Council.

#### **3. Enhanced working with WT**

Cllrs agreed that communication with WT was a problem. Liaising via their Contractor had improved the situation but was far from ideal. Cllr DC noted that a better working relationship with WT was essential with/without the lease.

	<p><b>4. Status quo</b></p> <p>Cllrs considered the pros + cons of the current arrangement.</p> <p>The current arrangement was at minimal cost to the Council, whilst taking on a lease would incur costs which could be a considerable burden on the Council in future years.</p> <p>Residents have access to the woodland without any management overhead for WHPC. A lease arrangement would require a great deal of resource to establish and manage in future years.</p> <p>The current arrangement kept all options open. However, the current arrangement doesn't guarantee right of access</p> <p><b><u>Conclusion</u></b></p> <p>Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purchase - Cllrs did not support this option</li> <li>Lease - Cllrs were not in favour of taking the lease now.</li> <li>Enhanced Working - <b>This was the preferred option.</b></li> <li>Status Quo - This is the current position.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cllrs agreed</b> to write to WT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advising of the decision not to take the lease at the current time</li> <li>• to seek to develop a better working relationship.</li> </ul>
20/305	<p><b>Clerks Report: Actions and matters arising from the last meeting</b></p> <p><b>1. Actions, incl outstanding action</b></p> <p><b>2. Matters arising</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Resident communication</li> <li>b. Any urgent matters arising.</li> </ul> <p>Cllrs approved payment of two invoices recently received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. DALC – training courses for Cllrs ABC + AC previously authorised by WHPC (£36.00)</li> <li>b. Wallart - Covid safety posters for the Playpark - previously authorised by the Open Spaces Committee (£120)</li> </ul>
20/306	<p><b>Councillors questions, reports and items for future agenda</b></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>Cllr JB asked if the Council could follow up on discussions with Highways regarding an additional site for the VAS unit – between McColls and the War Memorial.</p> <p>It was agreed the Open Spaces Committee will investigate this with Highways.</p>
20/307	<p><b>Next meeting:</b> To confirm the date of the next meeting (by video-conference) which is scheduled for Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> October.</p>

Meeting closed 8.56pm

Signed: *Anne Oliver*, Clerk to the Council, 16<sup>th</sup> Sep 2020

