

**WEST HILL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 4th March 2025 AT 7.30pm**

Present:	Chairman Cllr Francis Pullman (FP), Cllr ShirleyMay Saunders (SMS), Cllr Trevor Ingram (TI),
In attendance:	Anne Oliver Parish Clerk, 6 members of the public, DCC/EDDC Cllr Jess Bailey
Apologies	Cllr Ann Cooper (AC)

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council

Item (a)	Discussion and decisions (b)
25/089	<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"> - The Chairman expressed his thanks to 5 residents who spoke at the EDDC Planning Committee meeting to consider the planning application for Windmill Lane 23/1143/MFUL. He noted the Committee's decision to approve the application subject to conditions and shared the speakers' disappointment as the committee did not discuss any of the issues raised by the speakers. - The Minor Injuries Unit at Honiton Hospital will be temporarily closed from Friday 21 February to allow for the installation of new radiology equipment at Honiton. The service is moving temporarily to Ottery St Mary Hospital, where it will be available 7 days a week from 8am to 8pm. The X-ray service is also moving from Monday 24 February. The MIU and X-ray service will return to Honiton Hospital once the improvement works are finished, expected in June 2025.
25/090	<p>Apologies. To receive apologies and approve reasons for absence, if considered appropriate. Cllrs accepted Cllr AC's apology and reason for non-attendance at the meeting.</p>
25/091	<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>No members of the public spoke during this item.</p>
25/092	<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>District/County Cllr JB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noted the EDDC decision to approve the planning application for Windmill Lane 23/1143/MFUL. She congratulated the Parish Council and residents of Windmill Lane on their presentations to the Planning Committee and expressed her disappointment in the outcome. - Noted the media coverage of Devon County Council regarding "fire and rehire". - The Government has set a deadline of 21st March for the submission of interim plans for local government reorganisation with a full proposal by 28 November 2025.
25/093	<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>

	Cllrs FP, TI and SMS each declared no interests in items on the agenda.								
25/094	<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: 25/117</p> <p>The Chairman proposed that the Council's consideration of land for sale, agenda item 25/105, should taken place in public session. However if the Council wished to discuss the scale of the bid, this should be considered in part B as it was a commercial matter. Cllrs TI and SMS supported the proposal.</p>								
25/095	<p>Minutes: To receive the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 4th February 2025 (Minute 25/050 -25/078) and Extraordinary Meeting 19th February 2025 (Minute 25/079–25-088) to approve the signing of the Minutes by the Chairman as a true record. The minutes of the meeting of 4th February 2025 and the Extraordinary meeting of 19th February 2025 were unanimously confirmed as a true record and were signed by the Chairman.</p>								
25/096	<p>Planning Applications received: To consider a response to: None outstanding for response. N/A</p>								
25/097	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">Planning decisions received for information (*denotes WHPC differed)</td><td style="text-align: right;"><u>EDDC Decision</u></td></tr> <tr> <td>24/2564/TRE Broad Oak Lodge Ford Lane West Hill EX11 1XE T1: Holly - fell. Reason - thin sparse foliage and suppressed form.</td><td style="text-align: right;">Approved</td></tr> <tr> <td>23/1143/MFUL Land South of Windmill Lane The erection of 31 dwellings (11 of which will be provided as affordable housing), formation of access, open space and associated infrastructure</td><td style="text-align: right;">Approved</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Cllrs noted the decisions.</td></tr> </table>	Planning decisions received for information (*denotes WHPC differed)	<u>EDDC Decision</u>	24/2564/TRE Broad Oak Lodge Ford Lane West Hill EX11 1XE T1: Holly - fell. Reason - thin sparse foliage and suppressed form.	Approved	23/1143/MFUL Land South of Windmill Lane The erection of 31 dwellings (11 of which will be provided as affordable housing), formation of access, open space and associated infrastructure	Approved	Cllrs noted the decisions.	
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25/098	<p>To decide a response to a provisional TPO: 25/011/TPO Land at The Colonels West Hill Road, West Hill, EX11 1UZ</p> <p>It was resolved to write to EDDC Tree Officers in support of the TPO. (Clerk)</p>								
25/099	<p>Planning Matters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To decide a response to the Regulation 19 Public Consultation Emerging East Devon Local Plan. Councillors noted the consultation. Cllr SMS noted the final draft proposed 70 new homes for West Hill, of which approximately 60 have been approved, subject to s106 agreements via the planning applications for Windmill Lane and land north of Eastfield. Cllr TI noted the proposed Settlement Boundary for West Hill was unchanged from the previous draft plan. It was decided to delegate the Council's response to the Chairman. To decide a response to the Public Consultation for the modification of the Neighbourhood Plan for Clyst St Mary and Sowton (Bishops Clyst). Deadline 17th March 2025. It was decided to respond to the consultation in support of the Neighbourhood Plan and to congratulate the Parish Council on the development of the plan. 								

WHPC Groups + Initiatives

25/100	<p>Finance Working Group:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To consider and accept, if appropriate, a review of Internal Financial Controls.
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	<p>Cllr FP explained the Finance Working Group had carried out a review of the Council's internal controls as the Council had approved revised WHPC Financial Regulations at the 4th February 2025 meeting (Min 25/061).</p> <p>No concerns had been identified and the findings were circulated to Cllrs prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Cllr FP asked for Cllrs' comment or concerns arising from the review. No matters were raised.</p> <p>It was resolved to accept the review of Internal Financial Controls and to publish the report on the Council's website.</p>
2.	<p>To consider and adopt, if appropriate, an amended WHPC Risk Policy + Financial Risk Management Record.</p> <p>Cllr FP explained the Finance Working Group had carried out an examination of the activities of the Parish Council to identify potential risks and the measures to mitigate and manage the risk.</p> <p>Cllr FP gave an overview of the proposed WHPC Risk Policy and explained, in more detail, the proposed risk matrix.</p> <p>Cllrs were asked for their comments on a draft risk policy circulated prior to the meeting. Cllrs were satisfied that it met the needs of the Council.</p> <p>It was resolved to adopt the policy and to publish the policy on the Council's website.</p> <p>Cllr FP noted the Council had separate risk assessments for specific activities (eg Playpark) or events such as Remembrance Sunday. During February, the Finance Working Group had carried out a review of the risks associated with the Council's Financial Management. Each of the identified risks had been assessed for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the probability of occurrence - scale of impact - measures to manage the risk - actions required <p>A draft Financial Management Risk Assessment had been prepared and circulated to Cllrs prior to the meeting. It was proposed that this would replace previous versions.</p> <p>Whilst most of the risk were rated as Low/Medium, two risks were rated as "High":</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of key staff - Councillor vacancies/inquoracy <p>Cllrs were asked for their comments on the draft document. Cllrs were satisfied that it met the needs of the Council.</p> <p>It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to adopt the Financial Management Risk Assessment and to publish the policy on the Council's website. - to review the WHPC Risk Policy and Financial Management Risk Assessment on a six month basis (Annual Meeting May-25 and Nov-25) , or earlier if required.
3.	<p>To approve the updated 2025 Asset Register.</p> <p>The WHPC Asset Register had been updated to include land leased by the Council at a nominal value of £1.</p> <p>It was resolved to accept the WHPC Asset Register and to publish it on the Council's website.</p>
4.	<p>To note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Revisions to the Building Society Mandate Noted

	<p>b. a VAT Reclaim of £3,740.64 Noted</p> <p>c. Parish Paths Partnership Grant Award 2024-25</p> <p>It was noted that DCC had apologised for the delay in processing the WHPC 2024-25 grant application regarding maintenance of the Public Footpaths in West Hill. A grant award of £600 had been received by WHPC.</p>
25/101	<p>Neighbourhood Plan Working Group: To receive a report including the decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. to schedule a Working Group workshop to develop a community engagement strategy. b. to engage Community Engagement/ Neighbourhood Planning specialist to facilitate the workshop and to approve a budget up to £400+vat. <p>Margaret Hall, Chair of the Working Group, gave a report on behalf of the Working Group. A Neighbourhood Plan Champion had been engaged to facilitate a workshop to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop a community engagement strategy - to draft a survey form to be published in the coming months to seek community views. <p>It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to confirm the consultant costs, £400+vat, within the project budget previously approved. <p>The Chairman thanked the group for their ongoing work.</p>
25/102	<p>Village Hall Pedestrian Path Working Group: To receive an update, if available, on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Certificate of Lawfulness <p>It was noted that EDDC had assigned a case officer who had visited the site to view the works carried out by WHPC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Traffic Regulations Order <p>Devon County Council (DCC) had advised the public consultation on the Traffic Regulation Order for waiting restrictions on West Hill Road will open on 5th March 2025. Responses to the consultation can be made via the DCC website or in writing to DCC to arrive before 26th March 2025.</p> <p>Action: Clerk to publish details of the consultation on the WHPC website and noticeboards.</p>
25/103	<p>Emergency Plan Working Group: To receive a progress report and agree actions, if appropriate.</p> <p>Cllr FP gave a report on behalf of the Working Group. A presentation had been prepared for the Parish Meeting and for meetings of village organisations. It was hoped to encourage volunteers to come forward to be trained as Village Responders.</p> <p>Cllrs thanked the working group for their ongoing work.</p>

Other Matters

25/104	<p>West Hill Public Footpaths - Parish Paths Partnership scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To receive the annual survey and to consider recommendations. 2. To approve a grant application for 2025-2026 maintenance works. <p>The meeting received the findings of the annual footpath survey carried out by the village Footpath Warden. Two paths were classified as "Failed": Footpath 1 (water erosion/gully) and Footpath 6 (fallen branches/gate). DCC's Public Rights of Way had been notified in 2024 and the actions assigned to a contractor.</p>
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	<p>It was resolved to submit the WHPC 2025-26 grant application for £300 for maintenance of the Public Footpaths in West Hill.</p>
25/105	<p>To consider land for sale in the Parish and to decide actions, as appropriate.</p> <p>The Chairman acknowledged the Parish Council's longstanding desire to acquire land in the village for community use. The current Neighbourhood Plan also recognised the lack of open space in the village.</p> <p>The Chairman invited the Council to consider a parcel of land had recently come onto the market in West Hill.</p> <p>It was noted that a Parish Council has the Power to acquire land under section 124 of the Local Government Act 1972. However, the Chairman, stressed that this would be a major undertaking for the Council and there was a need for Due Diligence and clear, transparent audit trail.</p> <p>Cllrs consideration included, but not exclusively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the merits of the land for sale. 5.9 acres currently in agricultural use. - a rare opportunity that will attract a lot of interest - potential for a variety of community uses, subject to community consultation and planning approval for Change of Use. - the sale was now sale by Tender - best and final bids in excess of £60k were invited by mid-day 21st March. A very tight timescale for the Council. - Subject to confirmation by the Finance Working Group the Parish Council may be able to meet the terms of the sale. - the requirements of a Due Diligence process - Cllr and Clerk resources required, Councillor vacancies, impact on future Councils - acquisition costs and ongoing annual costs <p>Standing Orders were suspended.</p> <p>DCC/EDDC Cllr JB noted that the lack of available open space in the village was recognised and since it was created the Parish Council had sought to purchase/lease suitable land.</p> <p>Members of the public spoke to encourage the Council's interest in purchasing the land.</p> <p>The Chairman of West Hill Wasps explained the football club did not have a permanent base in the village. A thriving club, with 200+ active members aged 5-18 years, used facilities at three nearby schools. However, the facilities were in heavy demand and long term access was not guaranteed. The club considered that the land on the market would be suitable for their needs with minimal work. He stressed that use by West Hill Wasps would have little impact on the land itself. The members of the club thanked the Parish Council for their interest in acquiring the land.</p> <p>Standing Orders were resumed.</p> <p>It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to discuss further a WHPC bid subject to confirmation at an Extraordinary Meeting. - to approve a budget up to £5,000 for professional fees <p>On behalf of the Council, Cllr SMS thanked the West Hill Wasps volunteers for their work for the community.</p>
25/106	<p>To approve the Parish Council Newsletter for publication.</p> <p>It was resolved to approve the draft newsletter for publication in March 2025. Costs were previously approved Min 25/072 4th February 2025.</p>
25/107	<p>To consider correspondence regarding 381 and 382 bus services in West Hill</p> <p>Service 382: West Hill-Sidmouth</p>

	<p>Cllrs noted correspondence from Ottery Help Scheme who were seeking to increase the frequency of the service through West Hill. Currently the route operates a return service once a day.</p> <p>It was resolved to write to Ottery Help Scheme, Bus Company and Devon County Council in support of the proposal.</p> <p>Service 381: West Hill - Ottery St Mary In January 2025 a new 381 service was introduced to operate a return service on Mondays. Cllrs noted that the service had been advertised on the Parish Council website and noticeboards, however to date, passenger levels had been low. The Parish Council newsletter included an article on the service.</p> <p>It was resolved to write to Ottery Help Scheme, Bus Company and Devon County Council to propose a change of route to include Lower Broad Oak Road and Higher Broad Oak Road as this could better serve the village.</p>
25/108	<p>To receive an update on Assets of Community Value (if available) No update had been received by the Parish Council.</p>
25/109	<p>To consider arrangements for a. Covid National Day of Reflection Sunday 9th March</p> <p>To mark 5th anniversary of the declaration of the pandemic, a short service will be held at the Covid Memorial Tree behind St Michael's Church. The service will take place at mid-day.</p> <p>b. the Annual Parish Meeting Thursday 27th March and to approve costs.</p> <p>Cllrs agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - arrangements for the Annual Parish Meeting. - to establish a budget up to £100 for refreshments for the event.
25/110	<p>To consider a response, if any, to the EDDC public consultation on Public Spaces Protection Orders (deadline 28 April 2025). The Council agreed a nil response.</p>
25/111	<p>To consider correspondence received (if any). No further matters</p>
25/112	<p>To receive a report from the Parish Clerk including a. Defibrillator Familiarisation Session, Wednesday 26th March 2025. 11.00am RBL Clubhouse.</p> <p>Cllrs noted the event and encouraged residents to attend.</p>
25/113	<p>To review WHPC's Action Tracker and agree actions as considered appropriate.</p> <p>Further to Minute 25/061</p> <p>It was resolved to purchase a replacement projector and to approve a budget upto £1,300+vat.</p>
25/114	<p>Financial matters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. To consider and approve, if appropriate, any additional payments presented to the meeting. It was resolved to approve and sign one additional invoice presented to the meeting: Inv 2113 West Hill Village Hall - Room Hire for Feb-25 £61.01 To receive, if available, monthly Bank Reconciliations and finance trackers. Bank Reconciliations and Finance Reports were reviewed by the Finance Working Group and circulated prior to the meeting. Cllrs considered the papers and no questions or issues were raised.
25/115	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>
25/116	<p>Next meeting: To confirm arrangements for upcoming WHPC meeting on Tuesday 1st April 2025 7.30pm at the Village Hall</p> <p>The Chairman noted that an Extraordinary Meeting may be called during March to consider land for sale in the village.</p>

All members of the public left the meeting.

Part A ended 8.48pm

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.

Part B began at 8.55pm

25/117	<p>To consider land for sale in the Parish and to decide actions, as appropriate.</p> <p>Cllrs continued their consideration of land for sale.</p> <p>It was resolved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the Finance Working Group to manage the Due Diligence and acquisition process on behalf of the Council. b. to agree a maximum bid for the land. c. Subject to the findings, at an Extraordinary Meeting on WEDNESDAY 19th March 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Finance Working Group to present the findings of the Due Diligence process. - the Parish Council to decide a bid for the land, if considered appropriate.
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Meeting closed at 9.25pm

Signed

Date