

Westwell Parish Council
Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council
Held on Wednesday 1 April 2026 at 7pm, Westwell Village Hall, Westwell

1. Open Forum

No members of the public were present.

2. Present and apologies

Present: Cllrs Bainbridge (chair) Drury (vice-chair), Richards, Hutchinson, Wyatt, Farrington. Clerk – Sonia Young.

Apologies: Cllrs Lister, Ward and Bartlett

3. Declarations of Interest

None

4 4.1 Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2026 and matters arising.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of Westwell Parish Council held on 4 March 2026 be approved and confirmed as a true record.

Proposed: Cllr Drury. **Seconded:** Cllr Hutchinson. **All in agreement.** Cllr Wyatt abstained as not present at the March meeting.

Resolved:

It was resolved to approve the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

4.2 Matters Arising

4.2.1 Westwell broadband provision

Cllr Ward submitted detail prior to the meeting that showed Sky appears to be offering (some Westwell Parish residents) fibre to the home. Cllr Bainbridge said nothing had yet come through from BT or EE.

4.2.2 PC Aaron Hopkins

A meeting took place at The Wheel Inn between PC Aaron Hopkins and Cllrs and all agreed it was useful. It was agreed that Clerk will be the central WPC contact with the PC to report any issues that crop up.

4.2.3 Highways flooding

It was agreed that no further action on recent issues raised could be taken by WPC at this time and that it will wait for updates from KCC as well as checking, from time to time, for progress via the incident numbers logged by WPC with KCC.

Decision Items

5 5.1 Planning applications received for comment

5.1.1 PA/2026/0029 Sandbar Business Park, Maidstone Road, TN26 1AR – construction of an entrance security lodge (part retrospective).

WPC view: The proposed wall treatment for the entry security lodge in light coloured stone-effect ceramic tile is contrary to its rural location and will increase light pollution. This application is described as an entrance security lodge, but the drawing states it is an ancillary office, which is a more precise description as it has an entrance lobby, two offices, a meeting room, and two loos. It is located just south of the entrance gate in an area designated for recycling and welfare in the approved site layout drawing (Ref 15.17.005 L). Also of note is the variation from the approved landscape proposals: while the tree planting on the bunds and metal boundary fencing has all been done to the approved plan, it was noted that the entrance character has been changed from the planted landscaping specified in the landscape proposals to a hard landscape of white gabion walling. This creates a smart entrance, but it is a hard

urbanising feature in this rural location. This is an exception site originally agreed for Apta pots. While WPC welcomes the evolution of the site under its new owner, the logistics operator IKRA, it is vital that the physical evolution of the built environment respects its rural location in the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape. The warehouse building has appropriately dark cladding which sits well in the landscape and avoids reflectance intrusion at night. The same dark wall treatment should be used for this additional building. Other points were raised as:

- 1) The wall treatment for this building should continue the design established for the warehouse building (i.e. equivalent to Kingspan KS1000 anthracite grey). For the avoidance of doubt, the walls should not be the proposed stone-effect porcelain tiles which would be light reflecting and a continuation of the hard urbanising effect of the gabion walling.
- 2) The ancillary office / security hub is not an unreasonable change to the approved plan, but it should be clear that this is not a precedent for further built development on the site. WPC notes that there is already a primary office area as part of the warehouse which, it is assumed, is for use for fulfilment operations, whereas this ancillary office will presumably be for transport operations and the security of the site.
- 3) As a point of detail WPC notes that there will need to be a foul drainage connection for the loos- listed as “unknown” on the application; WPC assumes this will be resolved at building regulations stage.
- 4) The application is described as part-retrospective, but it is not clear what has already been constructed.

Resolved

It was proposed to object to the application as currently proposed due to the wall treatment in ceramic tile.

Proposed: Cllr Drury. **Seconded:** Cllr Bainbridge. **All in agreement.**

Resolved.

It was resolved to object to the application.

5.1.2 PA/2026/0371 17, Hoads Wood Gardens, TN25 4QB – Conversion of integral garage to habitable accommodation. Single-storey rear extension following the removal of the existing rear conservatory and bay window.

WPC view: The application is similar to others approved in Hoads Wood Garden. WPC notes there would be no material change to the built footprint; the changes affect the ground floor only; the loss of an integral garage is compensated by changing part of the front garden to three parking spaces; the house sits generously on its plot and so there would be no loss of amenity for neighbours.

Resolved

It was proposed to raise no objection – comment only

Proposed: Cllr Drury. **Seconded:** Cllr Farrington. **All in agreement.**

Resolved.

It was resolved to raise no objection to the application.

5.2 Update on Planning Matters in progress

5.2.1 Elvey Cottage – update

The ABC enforcement officer has confirmed that the enforcement notice stays in place. This means that the existing building is still illegal until it is modified according to the plans that have now been approved. The modification must start within three years, but WPC’s hope is that building works will start a lot sooner than the three years to resolve the current illegality. WPC will continue to monitor the situation.

5.2.2 ENF 2024/0048 Heath Cottage

The case officer has advised that the front wall and extension at the property require planning permission, and a response is awaited from the property owner.

5.2.3 ENF 2026/0064 Mercury Windows site – former Fairways Service Station

The owner has been advised that the advertising sign that has been erected should have had advertising consent from ABC Planning before being erected: they are being urged to regularise the situation by submitting a planning application in the normal way.

6. 6.1 Financial Report

6.1.1 Approval of payments for April in accordance with the budget
WPC main account

Expenditure to approve for April 2026		Method	£
Salary payment April	Clerk	BACS	946.40
Tax and NI	HMRC	BACS	251.60
Mowing inv 5521	All Seasons Gardening Services	BACS	678.60
Annual subscription	KALC	BACS	604.13
Bitdefender annual subscription	Reimburse Clerk	BACS	64.99
Total			£2,545.72

Income			
Interment fee	E Thorogood	BACS	150.00
Interment fee	R Butcher	BACS	150.00
Internal transfer	From Special reserve for Gold Hil undergrowth cutting	BACS	450.00
Internal transfer	From general reserve for clamber stack	BACS	6410.35
Total			£7160.35

Bank Reconciliation Balance at 31 March 2026: £9, 686. 87 less unrepresented cheques as follows:

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Actual balance = £9, 686.87 as at 31 March 2026

WPC deposit account

Expenditure			£
Internal transfer into current account from special reserve	From special reserve for Gold Hill undergrowth cutting	BACS	450.00
Internal transfer into current account from general reserve	From general reserve to pay for Clamber Stack	BACS	6410.35
Total			£6860.35

Income			
9 March	Interest	BACS	17.33
Total			£17.33

Bank Reconciliation Balance £39, 815.38 as at 31 March 2026 less un-presented cheques as follows:

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Actual balance: £39, 815.39 as a 31 March 2026

General reserve	13,739.20
Grant	2, 279
HiP	7,859.42
Deposit	15,937.77

**Interest added to the General Reserve*

WPC No 2 Account

Expenditure		Cheque No	£
Total			£00.00

Income			
Total			£00.00

Bank Reconciliation Balance £3.44 at 31 March 2026. Actual balance = £3.44 at 31 March 2026.

Resolved

6.1.1 WPC resolved to approve the accounts as noted and payments in accordance with the budget.

Proposed: Cllr Drury. **Seconded:** Cllr Hutchinson. **All in agreement.**

Resolved. WPC approved the accounts as noted and payments to be made in accordance with the budget.

6.2 Review of budget spend 2025-2026 and proposal to move unspent budget into a WPC Special Reserve to complete unfinished projects or into the WPC General Reserve

The Clerk circulated a year-end finance report to all Cllrs ahead of the meeting. It showed £9,687.87 held in the current account at year end. All Special Reserves held from 2024-2025 have been spent or released.

Resolved.

To move unspent budget into WPC Special Reserves as follows:

£6,686.87 held in a Special Reserve under S137 to support the ongoing village hall improvements to expand storage capacity for village clubs and societies, plus the annual fete.

£1,000 to be held in a Special Reserve under S137 to support the expansion of the monthly coffee mornings.

£2,000 held in a Special Reserve to pay for necessary software upgrades and allied support to maintain the Westwell Eye which is printed and distributed monthly to every home in the Parish.

Proposed: Cllr Bartlett. **Proposed:** Cllr Hutchinson. **Seconded:** Cllr Wyatt. **All in agreement.**

Resolved.

It was resolved to hold the unspent monies in Special Reserves as specified.

Information items

7. 7.1 Correspondence

7.1.1 Request from ACRE for parish councils to assist with its finances via Crowd Funding.

WPC agreed that it will not participate in the Crowdfunding proposal.

7.1.2 SLRA report of highways verge obstruction and safe passageway for pedestrians.

Cllr Bainbridge reported the issue to KCC

7.1.3 KCC Scrutiny Committee survey into water supply failures

Action: Cllr Bainbridge to reply for WPC

7.1.4 Ashford Town Council proposals

Action: Cllrs to respond individually to the consultation.

7.1.5 Phone call to clerk about land trespass at Watery Lane

Cllrs to await the requested email from the landowner with specifics.

8. 8.1 KALC Report

No update available.

9. 9.1 Highways

9.1.1 Potholes in the Pilgrims Way were raised as a continuing issue.

Action: Cllr Bainbridge to report them to KCC.

9.1.2 Report of potential residential trespass onto highway land.

Action: Cllr Farrington to source title plans to determine if trespass has taken place.

10. 10.1 Village Hall Management Committee

Cllr Farrington reported that the deep clean – by volunteers – had taken place. Cllr Farrington – chair of the Village Hall Management Committee - will continue to carry out the weekly clean. A cupboard will be built around the fitness equipment stored in the Cole Room. The radiator will be moved to increase room for storage shelves.

Action: Cllr Farrington will re-circulate proposals for a new external storage cabinet and Cllr Hutchinson will advise costs for 6ft x 8ft shed and new hardstanding for fete storage on the playing field near to the village hall. Cllr Richards said she was happy to assist with both. All costs and plans to be finalised at the May meeting.

Resolved

It was proposed that WPC pay, from its Special Reserve, for a new shed for storing fete items, plus hardstanding and also for a lockable metal cabinet and allied hardstanding works to increase overall storage capacity at the village hall.

Proposed: Cllr Drury. **Seconded:** Cllr Hutchinson. **All in agreement.**

Resolved

It was resolved to purchase extra storage using the WPC Special Reserve set up specifically for this purpose.

11. 11.1 Parish Priority Projects

Project list to be reviewed at the May meeting and thin it down.

Action: Clerk to update the list and circulate to all Cllrs in advance of the May meeting.

12. 12.1 Westwell Eye

The Clerk circulated an end of year financial report for the Westwell Eye to the Westwell Eye Sub-Committee ahead of the meeting as well as the minutes from the recent meeting held between Editor Carolyn Thorneloe, Cllr Bainbridge and The Clerk. The financial report showed a shortfall of £760.25 per annum (before the WPC annual grant of £600) at the current rate of advertising volume, assuming all current advertisers renew.

It was confirmed that the Westwell Players will be charged a reduced fee in consideration of their content exposure reducing to 4 x per annum.

It was agreed to levy a 10% increase on all advertising schedules to be levied at each annual renewal date.

As such, a sixth of a page will be £88 per annum and a third of page (black and white) will be £132 per annum and £187 per annum for a full colour position.

13. 13.1 Community Resilience Plan

No update available.

14. Additional Items

Cllr Farrington has replaced the bird guards on the playground swings.

Cllrs will suggest nominees for the Westwell Citizens Award to Cllr Wyatt ahead of the next meeting. The Award to be presented at the Annual Meeting on Wednesday 27 May.

Cllr Drury advised that the existing Asset of Community Value on The Wheel Inn will expire in the summer and should be renewed. Cllrs agreed. As ownership has changed, Cllr Farrington will source the Title Deeds to confirm ownership ahead of the renewal documentation.

Action: The Clerk.

The meeting closed at 21.27 hrs. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 6 May 2026.

Chairman’s Signature.....