

Westwell Parish Council
Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council
Held on Wednesday 10 April 2024 at 7pm, Westwell Parish Hall

1. Open Forum

No members of the public were present.

2. Present and apologies

Present: Cllrs Drury, (Chair), Bainbridge, Bartlett, Farrington, Butcher, Lister, Richards, and Wyatt.
Clerk – Sonia Young

Apologies: Cllr Hutchinson. Borough Cllr: Larry Krause

3. Declarations of Interest

All those Cllrs living close to sites submitted under the call for sites for the 2041 Local Plan (Item 5.2.2) but not yet considered by ABC. No Cllrs had pecuniary interests to declare.

4. Approval of the minutes of the meetings held on 13 March 2024

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of Westwell Parish Council held on 13 March 2024 be approved and confirmed as a true record.

Proposed: Cllr Bainbridge. **Seconded:** Cllr Butcher. **All in agreement.** Cllr Lister abstained as not present at the 13 March meeting.

Resolved. It was resolved to approve the minutes as a true record of the meeting subject to two minor changes.

Matters Arising

4.1 Proposed bridleway – correction of definitive map and statement of Land Registry Title Number TT74349. Cllr Richards said that KCC has asked the British Horse Society to repost the notices which had the same start and end point. KCC also advised that it has a backlog of such cases so it will take at least five years to attend to the application in question. At the point that it reaches the top of the pile, KCC will interview landowners and prospective users of the route, and submit that evidence to the County Council. The Parish Council, Borough Council and other local user groups will also be given 28 days to comment.

5.

5.1. Planning applications received for comment

5.1.1 PA/2024/0438 and PA/2024/0417 – Barn at Park House Farm, Westwell

This historic barn and stable repurposing have been patiently and persistently worked on by the owners who have been held up at considerable cost by planning delays.

This latest stage of the proposals would connect the threshing barn conversion to the stable conversion to make an integrated family home. The roof lights will improve the quality of ground floor space under the catslide roof of the barn. They are both sensible well-proportioned improvements to the design. The proposed roof plan drawing shows that the area of the glazed link is quite modest in relation to the total area of existing and retained peg tiled roof. This will therefore be acceptable from a potential light spill perspective in this rural setting and be an acceptably proportionate design feature.

Westwell Parish Council resolved to support the applications 2024/0438 and 2024/0417.

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

It was resolved to support the applications.

5.2 Other planning matters

5.2.1 PA/2023/0238 – Planning Appeal land adjoining Holly House, The Street, TN25 4LQ

Cllrs agreed that there would be no change to the arguments and comment already submitted in objection to the application and that it would appropriate to make an additional submission to the Planning Inspectorate as follows:

“This submission is in addition to the representation made on the details of the planning application. That representation is included in the ‘comments from interested parties’ document compiled for this appeal.

The refusal decision made by Ashford Borough Council was delegated, rather than a planning committee decision as the Parish Council had requested. The reason the parish council had requested decision by planning committee was to address the issue of how a rural village evolves and achieve small scale organic growth, without setting a precedent for larger growth that is both unsustainable and radically changes the character of the village.

So, while our approach to the original application and comments have not changed and our objection to the application stands, we do have a number of relevant questions that it would be helpful to have considered by the inspector and are as outlined below.

The AONB (now National Landscape) policies (ENV3b) together with the HOU3a and HOU5 housing policies including the confines policy and map protect the character of Westwell village and its setting in the Kent Downs National Landscape. But they also constrain organic growth because intensification within the confines of the village which might be permitted (but does not apply in this case) are for most of the village also subject to conservation area requirements. The overlap of the confines and conservation area maps is considerable. The present application is neither compliant with HOU3 – being outside the confines, nor meets any of the criteria policies in HOU5 being neither an HOU5 listed settlement nor fitting the criteria listed for proposals in the countryside.

The parish council needs to find out how “absolute “this planning situation is. Is this a matter of planning balance in which there is Planning “decision space” to consider “reasonable evolution of a village” in an AONB with small scale development, for example by interpreting sustainability in a rural context, or are the criteria as cut and dried as demonstrated by the ABC delegated decision?

If the “decision space” is confirmed as presently interpreted for this case, that will be reassuring in that the protection of the village in planning terms is strong. But it will also inform the Parish Council and community thinking about matters of evolution and vibrancy and what representations to make into the Local Plan review now underway.

If on the other hand the Inspector’s conclusion is that the appeal should be granted that will influence housing topic discussions in the village. It is worth noting that the only other recent new build development in the village has been for 3 houses in the former pub garden. That application was within the confines, and resisted initially by the planning officer as being against the openness of the conservation area but in the end was approved on evidence of local need.

The parish council and, we believe, many residents want the protection and continuity of character provided by the current planning policies but would also like to understand how to create some “room for manoeuvre” without opening the flood gates for larger development. The inspector’s decision on this appeal will be eagerly awaited to inform responses to other proposals, and to the Local Plan policy consultations to come.”

Action: This additional submission will be further reviewed by email to ensure there is no risk of confusion with original submission. Clerk to then submit both the original submission and the additional submission via the Planning Inspectorate portal.

5.2.2 ABC Call for Sites for the Local Plan 2041

WPC will arrange informal discussion, where possible, with each of those who would be impacted by development of any of the sites and draft and submit preliminary comments in advance of the formal consultation by ABC. WPC will also engage in any informal consultation meetings arranged by ABC or KALC.

It was resolved to establish a WPC Working Group to draft and submit comments as soon as possible in order to try to be prior to the initial filtering of the sites by ABC in July. Cllrs

Butcher, Bartlett, Drury, Richards, and Bainbridge will sit on the WPC Working Group; other Parishioners will be invited to join.

Action: Clerk to circulate to all Cllrs the map created by Cllr Bartlett of all the proposed sites in the Parish and showing the reference keys allocated by ABC.

5.2.3 Elvey Cottage enforcement notice

As no response had been received to emails sent to ABC Planning for an update on the status of the Enforcement Notice, Westwell Parish Council resolved to send a formal letter of concern to ABC Head of Planning Simon Cole.

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

It was resolved to send a formal letter of concern regarding the apparent inaction by ABC on this matter.

Action: The Clerk

6. Playground

6.1 Playground

6.1.1 The new equipment is in use following a successful post-installation inspection. The reinstalled roundabout did not pass the inspection however the inspector advised that if WPC could arrange to make a minor adjustment to increase the gap as required between the bottom of the roundabout and the ground level to be between then it would be acceptable and not require a further inspection. WPC Cllrs agreed that this course of action would be appropriate. Cllrs Farrington and Drury will check the adjustments and if satisfactory the roundabout will be brought back into use.

7. Cemetery

7.1 Cemetery

7.1.1 Proposal to approve the updated Westwell Cemetery T&Cs – document circulated in advance of the meeting.

Cllrs wanted the 'next in line' approach to be confirmed as active at the point of purchase.

Action: The Clerk to update the document to add clarity and then circulate it for approval by email. Cllr Drury to complete the project to align the new cemetery scan map with the ledgers and the newly computerised ledgers.

7.1.2 Proposal to approve the WPC Deed of Grant of Right of Burial and Deed of Grant of Interment of Ashes – the deeds circulated in advance of the meeting.

It was resolved to approve the two Deeds.

Proposed: Cllr Wyatt. **Seconded:** Cllr Butcher. **All in agreement.**

It was resolved to adopt the Deeds.

7.1.4 Planting of two cherry trees at the cemetery

The discussion was deferred to the next meeting.

8. Financial Report

8.1 WPC main account

Expenditure to approve for April 2024		Cheque No	£
Salary payment April	The Clerk	BACS	766.06
Tax & NI	HMRC	BACS	191.40
Annual subscription	KALC	BACS	536.63
Mowing inv 4611	All Seasons Gardening Services	BACS	558.40

Expenses software and mileage	Reimburse The Clerk	BACS	199.48
Total			£2,251.97

Income			
Total			

Bank Reconciliation Balance at 31 March 2024 = £1877.83 less un-presented cheques as follows

--	--	--	--

Actual balance = £1877.83 as at 31 March 2024

WPC deposit account

Expenditure			£
Total			£00.00

Income			
11 Mar	Interest	BACS	49.76
Total			£49.76

Bank Reconciliation Balance £47, 400.80 at 31 March 2024 Less un-presented cheques as follows:

--	--	--	--

Actual balance = £47, 400.80 at 29 February 2024

General reserve	21,324.61
Grant	£2, 279
HiP	7,859.42
Deposit	£15,937.77

WPC No 2 Account

Total			£00.00
--------------	--	--	---------------

Income			
Total			£00.00

Bank Reconciliation Balance £3.44 at 31 March 2024

Actual balance = £3.44 at 31 March 2024

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

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

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

8.2 Estimates

The estimate for works to the trees on Gold Hill bank were circulated prior to the meeting. Cllrs were unable to approve the quote as given as it did not cover the full work to include the closure of the road by KCC or, potentially, carrying out the work by using banksmen which would reduce anticipated costs substantially. The cost of the application into ABC for approval of the tree work was also needed.

Action: The Clerk to seek further clarification on the missing costs and ask for an update on the status of the application.

Information items

9. Correspondence

10. 10.1 KALC

Cllr Bartlett will report back after the next meeting.

11. 11.1 Highways

The dangerous ditch at Watery Lane has still not been sorted and made safe by KCC highways.

Action: Cllr Lister to follow up.

12. 12.1 Village Hall Management Committee

Cllr Bainbridge will report back after the next meeting. The Clerk has signed up WPC so it will be advised when the next round of grants for the installation of solar energy is open.

13. 13.1 EV Charging Points

The owner of The Wheel might be willing to consider a charging point being installed for the Parish at the rear of his land ;as there is a 3 phase supply into the Church nearby this might help the feasibility the Pub already has the necessary three-phase electricity supply to support a charging point. Further investigation of interest and feasibility to follow.

14. 14.1 Management of the trees on Gold Hill bank

Item discussed at (8.2)

15. 15.1 Westwell Eye

The Working Group will meet and report back at the next meeting.

16. 16.1 Asset Register

Proposal to approve the updated Asset Register – document circulated in advance of the meeting.

Cllrs discussed updating the valuation of the Village Hall on the Asset Register to its current insurance valuation. The Clerk will check advice from the external auditors on this and make any necessary amends to the document before re-circulating it for approval by email; it is required for the AGAR and the internal audit diarised for 25 April.

Cllrs were advised that the noticeboard at Tutt Hill has been moved and is once again usable.

Cllrs thanked Mercury Windows for moving it, and Cllr Wyatt for organising the solution.

17. 17.1 Financial Regulations

The document was circulated at the March meeting for Cllrs to read.

WPC resolved to adopt the new Financial Regulations as presented.

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

Action: The Clerk to upload the document to WPC website.

18. 18.1 Additional items

Damage to the kerbing and grassed area outside St Mary's. As the main issue is the rotting away of the stump under the path edge it was agreed that repairs would be by a request for a quote to Dwyer Engineering who installed the path originally. A separate repair job is needed to the lower end of the hall access road which is suffering potholes and a broken French drain. It was agreed to ask Frank Dwyer for a quote to carry out both sets of works at the same time. The works will be paid for from the WPC assets maintenance budget.

Action: Cllr Bainbridge.

The meeting closed at 21.35. WPC AGM will be held on 8 May 2024.

Chairman's Signature.....