

Minutes



Westbourne

Parish Council

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Minutes of Westbourne Parish Council's meeting which took place on Thursday 10 June 2021 at 7.15pm at The Meeting Place, North Street, Westbourne.

Present: Cllr Lade Barker, Cllr Roy Briscoe, Cllr Richard Hitchcock, Cllr Mike Magill, Cllr Ann Pearcey, Cllr Nigel Ricketts and Clare Kennett, Clerk to the Council.

Meeting chaired by Cllr Hitchcock. Three members of the public were present.

1. To receive declarations of interest and updates to the Register of Interests: None.

2. Apologies for absence: Cllr David Mack and Cllr Kate McNicol.

3. Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 20 May 2021: The minutes were agreed to be a true record and were signed as such by the Chair.

4. Updates and issues from the minutes of 20 May 2021:

Item 6.10: It was agreed to hold the Annual Parish Assembly on Saturday 24 July in the afternoon which would also provide an opportunity to inform residents of the Neighbourhood Plan referendum on 29 July. It was noted that the Clerk is on leave on this date so another member of the Council would need to take the minutes.

5. Open forum: None.

6. Tree Champions: It was agreed to appoint three new tree champions – Kim Franks, Sandy Galloway and Diana Steely. Cllr Hitchcock said that a meeting would be organised for the tree champions to discuss next steps and Guy Schofield would also be invited.

7. County Councillor's comments and questions: Members noted the report received from County Councillor Mike Magill, included below.

Covid-19: I will not comment on specific numbers in the area as they will be out of date by the meeting and I can speak about them then. The total numbers of Covid-19 cases across the South East remain low but we have seen an increase in the proportion of cases of variants of concern. These include a small number of cases of the variant first detected in India. All these cases have been followed up and investigated and evidence suggests these cases were linked to international travel. Election: Following the election in May, the Cabinet has been announced with the only change being the Cabinet Member for Highways, which in my view is good news. My plan will be to get Councillor Dennis to visit the area to see the area and key issues that we face with our roads and how they are under strain with increased development planned. This will include a visit to Monks Hill to continue to put pressure to get the speed limit changed. There is an additional plan visited by Paul Marshall, the Leader of WSCC and his Vice Chair, Deborah Urquhart. This will be great for me to show around the area and the problems that we are facing. This will

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not necessarily by specific local details, as they will be dealt with the Cabinet Members, but if there is anything you are concerned with, please let me know. I plan on discussing the lack of facilities for rural communities such as bus services as well as the lack of infrastructure for all the planning that is being developed.

Work with District Councillor: Roy and I had a good meeting a couple of weeks ago to look at key areas that we need to address, including fly tipping, increased/changed police engagement with the community, and classification of roads. We have agreed this will be an ongoing arrangement where he can increase liaison between the two councils to improve our community.

Children Services: John Coughlan, CEO HCC, will give an update to Members on the status and progress under the Children's Improvement Programme, following the damning report in 2019. This is progressing well at the moment and the feedback session should give a better idea of where we are. There will be a discussion in regards to the Early Help Redesign and the priorities ahead. This is more for awareness as the meeting will not be held in a public forum but you are all aware of my stance on this.

Sussex Crisis Fund: A crucial crisis fund that gave £2.7 million in grants to local charities who were working on the Covid-19 frontline and supporting vulnerable people last year has been relaunched – thanks to a £300,000 boost from the County Council. Sussex Community Foundation is re-booting the Sussex Crisis Fund (support and recovery phase) and hopes that local people will once again step forward with donations to support those who are struggling to make ends meet.

Safe Against Scams Webinars: Over the next three months, the West Sussex Community Safety and Wellbeing team are working with West Sussex Trading Standards to offer residents free online webinars to help keep themselves 'Safe Against Scams'. The sessions have been organised as the County has seen a rise in a number of different scams, including telephone, courier and romance fraud. The dates are 15 June 10-11.30am, 15 June 6-7.30pm, 27 July 10-11.30am, and 27 July 6-7.30pm. If you have any queries about this or anything else, please feel free to contact me at any time and I will of course be more than happy to help.

Cllr Ricketts asked why wooden barriers had been placed along the bridge in Aldsworth instead of crash barriers. Cllr Magill said that the road safety team were currently doing a safety assessment. It was discussed that the chevrons were also out of date and Cllr Magill said Highways were looking into this.

8. District Councillor's comments and questions: Members noted the report received from District Councillor Roy Briscoe, included below.

Grants: Information is available at www.chichester.gov.uk/enablinggrantscheme www.chichester.gov.uk/businessratesannouncements. I have also approved the NHB allocations for the coming year.

Lateral flow tests: can be obtained from most chemists, worth doing them especially if going out into the public realm or meetings.

Meetings: Now being held face-to-face for those where decisions are made, including cabinet, council and planning committee. Lots of precautions are in place to ensure those present remain safe.

Finances: CDC's finances continue to be affected by the pandemic, mainly income from car parks which supports many services. We continue to review working practices and being more efficient. Targets for this year have been met but we have had an unexpected bill from a 1.5% employee pay rise, after being told it was to be frozen. We are working on ways to re-invigorate the district's economy and it looks

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like the event in Priory Park will go ahead on 30 July and 31 July 'Music of the Musicals and Queen UK'.

Housing: Hyde are a challenging registered provider to deal with - progress on issues has been slow but it is being made. Our housing manager is chasing Hyde on my behalf to ensure they do what they have promised!

Environment: Slow progress is being made on the River Ems and the extraction. I'm sure most will have seen the Havant Thicket passed Havant's Planning Committee last week, but it still needs permission from Hants East District Council. We were hoping that would impact on us and reduce extraction from the aquifer at Walderton but the water from the Reservoir is for Southern Water's use. A summit was held between interested parties at the end of May looking at the water quality in the Chichester and Langstone Harbours, a summary was circulated afterwards which I've shared with you. Most of the main players were present and Southern Water have agreed a base budget for the group to continue.

Recycling: The WEEE (small electric goods) recycling and textile recycling has been put back but expected to start on 21 July. The logistics are proving problematical and it is likely households will be supplied a bag for each and when collected a new bag will be left. We have started the procurement for new refuse collection vehicles, which includes two electric lorries at an additional cost of £200k.

Fly tipping: Chichester Contract Services (CCS) are still arranging a meeting of all the agencies to make a plan of action.

Policing: Lamping and poaching have dropped off of late, probably due to the time of the year. A prolific thief has been stealing batteries and aluminium from farmyards and the vehicle used is a Citroen van in white reg. no. PK08FTX. The police are aware and she has been arrested and bailed but continues to be active. The increased use of catapults continues with offenders shooting birds but it's only a matter of time before someone gets hurt. Please report incidents to the police.

The recent dry weather has brought out off-road motorcyclists with no number plates and many not have tax or insurance. Please report this to the police as they are using the road system to get onto fields where damage has been caused.

Novium Museum: Has reopened and is free to visit, but worth making an appointment. The Roman Week was well attended and received. The Mystery Warrior and Livestock Markets of Chichester exhibitions have been extended.

Planning: We continue to gather evidence for the Chichester Local Plan Review to see if the government's target is achievable. CDC has a duty to plan positively and any attempt to thwart the numbers allocated currently 628 per annum is viewed in bad light by the Planning Inspectorate. Until we have evidence to show the numbers are not sustainable, we are at the mercy of developers and the planning inspectorate. We have an interim planning statement which we ask developers to adhere to and most do but some put in speculative applications in the hope they will get permission. That is the beauty of having a Neighbourhood Plan at decision statement stage – it provides protection for the parishes that have chosen to make one and we are at that point in Westbourne. A planning application for a nine-bedroom house in Woodmancote came up at CDC's Planning Committee and I'd like to thank Richard Hitchcock for attending and speaking on the Council's behalf. Southbourne's Neighbourhood plan was out for consultation and I am hoping people will have asked for a railway bridge crossing as new development will affect Westbourne.

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9. Police incident report: PCSO Baylee Reed attended the meeting and reported that there had been a lot of police work in the area to prevent ball bearing incidents and nuisance motorbikes. This included speaking to the usual suspects and informing them of the consequences. Although there were minimal reports of motorbikes, some had been going around the fields and Cemetery Lane and it was likely they would not have any insurance. PCSO Reed said there had been a hit and run incident on Edgell Road and that nobody had been injured. Councillors asked about e-scooters which are illegal but are often seen being driven on the road. PCSO Reed advised that if people know the offender they could report it to the police and it would be investigated under S165 of the road traffic act for no mot or insurance. PCSO Reed said that the police were trying to make the Operation Crackdown (anti-social driving) website easier for people to use. PCSO Reed said that overall there was little crime in Westbourne although there were some spates of crime from time to time. He said he continues to patrol the area both in a marked and unmarked car. PCSO Reed said he had access to all reports of crime but it was best to include his name when reporting incidents to ensure he received a copy.

10. Neighbourhood Plan: Cllr Hitchcock said that they were on schedule to go to referendum on Thursday 29 July 2021. The Parish Council thanked Piers Mason and Patricia Goodhew who have worked extremely hard on the Plan in recent weeks to meet the deadline. It was discussed that communications would be needed to raise awareness of the NP and the referendum and that an Annual Parish Assembly would be held on Saturday 24 July at the Rectory Lawn to inform people.

11. Internal audit for financial year 2020/21: The Clerk and Cllr Hitchcock met Andy Beams, Mulberry & Co, on Tuesday 8 June. The auditor's report was circulated before the meeting which councillors agreed to approve. The full report is available at www.westbourne-pc.gov.uk and below is an excerpt to summarise his findings.

Our sample testing did not uncover any errors or misstatements that require reporting to the external auditor, nor did we identify any significant weaknesses in the internal controls such that public money would be put at risk. It is clear the council takes governance, policies and procedures very seriously and I am pleased to report that overall, the systems and procedures you have in place are fit for purpose and whilst my report may contain recommendations to change these are not indicative of any significant failings, but rather are pointers to improving upon an already well-ordered system. It is therefore our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Westbourne Parish Council are well established and followed.

The Clerk prepared and submitted information for review at the end of April for the accounts of Westbourne Parish Council. As in previous years, these were presented in an accurate and clear way and demonstrate adherence to and an understanding of correct accounting procedures for local authorities. A Joint Burial Committee exists with Southbourne Parish Council, and work had begun earlier in the year, requesting accurate information was forwarded in good time to Westbourne for inclusion in the year-end accounts. This has proven to be problematic, with requests for information either not responded to, or a lack of clarity provided regarding the figures. This includes at least two different year-end sets of figures for the Joint Burial Committee being forwarded to Westbourne Parish Council. The audit meeting was rescheduled while the Clerk at Westbourne attempted to obtain the necessary detail and then calculate the appropriate share of income and expenditure to include

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within Westbourne's year-end figures, with additional support provided in attempting to analyse the information provided by the internal auditor. The fact that this has not successfully been completed is no reflection on the time and effort of the Clerk, who has spent considerable time in trying to resolve this matter and remains determined to do so. A further complication has been the fact that the two councils have different internal auditors, who have provided slightly different advice as to how to progress this matter. Combined with the councils operating under different accounting regimes (receipts and payments for Westbourne, income and expenditure for Southbourne), I would recommend that in future both councils use the same internal auditor for consistency of advice and to ensure that the Joint Burial Committee figures are accurately reflected in both councils accounts. The effect for Westbourne Parish Council is that the year-end audit has taken five hours in total, where I would have anticipated it taking between two and two and a half hours ordinarily, based on previous audits and the quality of the Clerk's preparation. This audit report is based on Westbourne Parish Councils year-end figures (excluding the Joint Burial Committee), and I am confident that they are accurately presented by the Clerk.

It was agreed to write to the Chair of Southbourne Parish Council to bring to their attention Westbourne's experience during the audit process for the last financial year, and to recommend improvements to ensure a seamless audit process for this financial year.

12. Accounting statements 2020/21 (Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Section 2): Members agreed with the accounting statements for the year ended 31 March 2021. Cllr Hitchcock signed Section 2 of the AGAR as a true record. The Clerk advised that the public rights and publication of unaudited Annual Governance and Accountability Return would take place between Monday 14 June and Tuesday 27 July 2021.

13. Community Chest Grant: Members agreed unanimously to give a grant of £433 to Westbourne Weekend to support its community events in 2021. The application is available at www.westbourne-pc.gov.uk

14. General Power of Competence: Members agreed that the criteria had been met for eligibility during 2021-22. (To note that the number of councillors elected at the last election in May 2019 was equal to two thirds of its total number of councillors and the Clerk holds a CILCA qualification).

15. Co-option: It was agreed to advertise the remaining vacancy on the Parish Council and the Clerk confirmed that she had received interest from two members of the public.

16. Payments for approval: Members considered and approved the list of payments totalling £89,001.06 due immediately (which must be paid between now and 8 July 2021) and require advance authorisation. There were payments totalling £1,480.68 made since 10 June which require retrospective authorisation. In compliance with Financial Regulation 5.2, personal payments (including salaries) were summarised on a separate confidential paper. The list of payments is included in Appendix 1.

17. Correspondence: Members noted the list of correspondence.

18. Announcements and items for the next meeting: None.

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19. Date of next meeting: The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday 8 July 2021 at 7.15pm

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, the Council may decide by resolution to exclude the press and public from any part of the meeting under a Section Two item.

Section Two

20. JBC issues: It was noted that discussions that take place during Section Two of a meeting should remain confidential to allow members the ability to discuss matters in confidence. Members were concerned that there had been a breach of confidence and that Chichester District Council would investigate under the Code of Conduct.

It was agreed that Westbourne's complaint to Southbourne Parish Council should still be considered as it was not just about the JBC Clerk but also a number of ongoing finance and governance concerns. It was hoped that an investigation would recommend improvements. It was noted that a meeting would be organised with representatives from both councils (JBC committee members) to discuss the governance of the JBC and to revise the constitution. It was noted that a locum had been found to cover the JBC Clerk vacancy in the short-term and that councillors would be assisting with burials during this period.

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Appendix 1

Westbourne Parish Council, 10 June
2021

Agenda item 16: Payments for approval

(DD: payment made by Direct Debit, IB: payment made by Internet Banking, C: cheque payment including number, PC: payment made by petty cash, *movement of an earmarked reserve, ** paid from No 2 account)

Payments for approval	Total	Net	VAT
EE&T Mobile Parish Council and			
DD Westbourne Help lines	41.53	34.61	6.92
IB Confidential payments	1,365.95	1,365.95	0.00
IB WSCC LGPS April 21	437.40	437.40	0.00
IB Microshade cloud storage	53.70	44.75	8.95
IB MS 365	9.48	7.90	1.58
DD SSE street light electricity	72.04	68.62	3.42
IB CDC litter/dog bins 2020/21	1,583.08	1,319.24	263.84
Mulberry & Co councillor training in June 21	294.00	245.00	49.00
Reimbursement C Kennett Zoom subscription 2021/22	143.88	119.00	23.98
Transfer funding to Unity Trust Bank Savings Account to protect under the FSCS	85,000.00	85,000.00	0.00
	89,001.06	88,642.47	357.69

Payments for retrospective approval

WSCC street lighting maintenance for IB 2020/21	1,480.68	1,233.90	246.78
IB			
	1,480.68	1,233.90	246.78

1. Treasurers account number 1

Balance per statement 31/05/21	184,860.26
Less outstanding payments	0.00
Outstanding receipts	0.00
Add petty cash	0.00
Revised bank	184,860.26

Cashbook control

Balance forward 01/04/21	148,685.96
Add total receipts to date	52,248.68
Less total payments to date	16,074.38
Cashbook at 31/05/21	184,860.26