

Minutes



Westbourne

Parish Council

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly of Westbourne Parish which took place at 7pm on Thursday 18 April 2024 at The Meeting Place, North Street, Westbourne.

In attendance: Cllr Roy Briscoe, Westbourne Parish Council and Chichester District Council
Cllr Kim Franks, Westbourne Parish Council
Cllr Richard Hitchcock, Westbourne Parish Council
Cllr Joanna Luckett, Westbourne Parish Council
Cllr Andrew Kerry-Bedell, West Sussex County Council (left at 8.20pm)
Clare Kennett, Clerk to the Parish Council
22 members of the public

Meeting chaired by Cllr Hitchcock, Chairman of Westbourne Parish Council

1. Welcome and introduction: Cllr Hitchcock opened the meeting and welcomed attendees, explaining that it was not a Parish Council meeting, but organised by the Parish Council on behalf of the local community. Held annually, it was an opportunity to celebrate the excellent work that was carried out across the Parish and a chance for residents to find out more about what was happening locally and raise any local issue of importance.

Cllr Hitchcock said it was his pleasure to introduce Dr Will Denby from Emsworth Medical Practice, who was speaking in his capacity as the Chair of the Hampshire and IOW Local Medical Committee. Dr Denby was focusing on a broader view of General Practice in England, basing his talk around questions from the floor.

2. Guest speaker: Dr Will Denby, Chair of the Hampshire and IOW Local Medical Committee.

Dr Denby said Local Medical Committees were old organisations that came into force over a hundred years ago as a means of providing regulation to local doctors before the NHS and General Medical Council were formed. Members to the Hampshire and IOW Local Medical Committee were elected by local peers and it covered south-east Hampshire. Dr Denby said he enjoyed his role as Chair which was fulfilling and enabled him to get involved in national campaigns. Dr Denby said that doctors in general agreed that the health system was not in a great place and that they wanted exactly the same as patients - knowing who their doctor was, seeing them in a reasonable timeframe and instant communications with other health care professionals. Dr Denby said that this cost a lot of money and funding was not always available. Dr Denby then showed a short video which explained the

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Hampshire and IOW Local Medical Committee's campaign which captured this point. Dr Denby then answered questions from attendees.

Q. Please could you explain what greater freedom to do your job was? In his experience Southbourne Surgery had been excellent. How did the Local Medical Committee fit in with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)?

A. Dr Denby said all GPs were individual businesses and the government was the only customer who issued one big contract to them. Over time, the government wanted GPs to carry out specific pieces of work and the focus frequently changed. There had also been several health secretaries in recent years which meant priorities had shifted. This meant the GPs work jumped around, rather than being able to do core GP work. Practices were all different and it was difficult to compare the workload of a semi-rural surgery, such as Emsworth Medical Practice, to one in Fratton, for example, and a 'one size fits all approach' was not always best. GPs knew their local communities, had good links with other organisations and were best placed to understand the needs of their patients. However, Dr Denby said he understood that from the government's perspective they were spending a lot of money and would want strings attached to know it was being delivered. Dr Denby said that there would be a general election soon and members of the public should challenge their MPs to ask for the improvements they would like to see. Dr Denby said CCGs no longer existed which were set up in the Cameron-era to guide locally, and had been replaced with Integrated Care Systems which were no so local.

Q. A resident said that he had received good healthcare at Emsworth Surgery and was able to compare that against his time when he lived in America where there was a very different system, and it made him realise how fortunate he was to live in the UK. The one big difference was that America seemed to have more preventative care with medical checks every five years so problems were picked up before they got severe. NHS dentistry was also underfunded and it was worrying that medicine may also go that way with a shift towards more privatisation.

A. Dr Denby said he had worked in Australia and that had given him a similar experience. He said that the NHS was not perfect but seem as a nirvana by many. In terms of privatisation, the NHS was precious and once it had slipped through our fingers, it would never come back. Dr Denby said that regular health checks were available from the age of 40 onwards. He said he would love to do more preventative work but it was hard to see how to deliver it well.

Q. What else could residents do to improve the system for GPs as it was more than just objecting before a general election?

A. Dr Denby said that residents needed to speak to their elected representatives as the NHS was owned by everyone in the country and had to be led by politicians.

Q. Should the government give you more money or more autonomy? Others in European countries pay more for their healthcare system.

A. Dr Denby said people were living longer, there were more complex healthcare needs and medicine and technology were becoming more sophisticated and expensive. Also, GPs saw 90% of patients but only received 5% of NHS funding. This was likely to mean that the public would need to get used to paying more for the

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NHS though taxes in the future. At the same time, experienced GPs were leaving the profession due to work pressures and exhaustion, and more needed to be done to improve the working environment and prevent people from leaving.

Q. There seemed to be a lot of money being spent at QA Hospital in a new A&E department.

A. Dr Denby said that from his experience, a new A&E at QA would be very welcome as the current department was under a lot of pressure. Dr Denby said there was a hidden workforce that would likely come back if work pressures were not so intolerable. If the system was fixed, patients would see an improvement and it would also bring doctors back. As GPs were independent businesses, they could not go into debt so they often ran at a loss instead. Some treatments were more expensive than others, and rightly so, which was why it was not easy to redistribute funding.

Q. With an ageing population (35% over 65 in Chichester), can pharmacists help doctors relieve targets?

A. Dr Denby said pharmacists had always been helpful with treating minor issues, such as skin and ear infections. It was good that patients could speak to a pharmacist for a diagnosis and treatment, and that there were clear protocols and guidelines in place. GPs were best at working with older patients who may have more complex needs. GPs had always been happy to work alongside other professionals who added much value, but they were not a replacement for qualified and experienced doctors.

Q. Private healthcare was available in Emsworth and residents could not be blamed for using those services if waiting times to see a GP were long.

A. Dr Denby said he did not work in private practice and recognised that it was expensive for those who used it. Dr Denby said it was important to keep hold of the NHS.

Q. If there was one thing that you would prefer not to do, what would it be?

A. Dr Denby said the government had made practices merge into Primary Care Networks which seemed like a good idea at the time, but, with hindsight, a lot of money had been spent on them with little return other than adding extra administration. It was difficult to see what difference they had made.

Q. Why do GPs not do what they want to do?

A. Dr Denby said that GPs had a contract with the government which they had to deliver, and GPs tried to do their very best to meet those objectives and targets.

Cllr Hitchcock thanked Dr Denby for an interesting presentation.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7.50pm for an interval with cheese, wine and light refreshments.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting at 8.20pm.

3. The Annual Report of the Parish Council: Councillor Richard Hitchcock, Chairman of Westbourne Parish Council, said that it had not been the best of years for him. Ill health had prevented him from attending several Parish Council meetings, though he

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was able to attend virtually and had kept in touch enough to provide a reasonably comprehensive report of the Council's activities in the last 12 months. His thanks went to Cllr Nigel Ricketts, Vice-Chairman of the Council, for covering in his absence. Cllr Hitchcock was pleased to report that the medics appeared to have everything under control (thank you NHS) and he was therefore able to resume full duties as Chairman.

The first thing Cllr Hitchcock wanted to report was that Westbourne had a full complement of nine parish councillors, a phenomenon which was all too rare. The Council welcomed Joanna Lockett to its ranks in January and Cllr Hitchcock took the opportunity to thank fellow councillors for all their hard work on behalf of the Parish in the last 12 months. They were, in alphabetical order, Neil Attewell, Lade Barker, Roy Briscoe, Kim Franks, Jane Gould, Nigel Ricketts and Laura Veltom. The Council's thanks also went to the two co-opted Planning Committee members, Frank Campbell and Kevan Pegley. Last, by no means least, the Council was indebted to its invaluable Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, Clare Kennett, for keeping the show on the road!

What had your Council been up to since the last Annual Parish Assembly in May 2023? Here was a flavour:

- Organised three litter-picking events, two in the spring and one in the autumn, supported by the Final Straw Foundation and Greening Westbourne. All well attended.
- Organised a well-attended Annual Parish Assembly with a presentation on the Lying in State and Funeral of the late Queen.
- Organised a Coronation Street Party last May followed by 'The Big Help Out' when some residents helped with cleaning the village gateways and fingerposts, and did another litter pick.
- Held a consultation on speed limit reductions on Foxbury Lane, Monk's Hill and Whitechimney Row. Traffic Regulation Orders submitted and awaiting consideration by WSCC.
- Worked with our County Councillor in putting together a Traffic Regulation Order to prevent HGVs transiting through the village.
- Received a notification from WSCC that they will be moving the 30mph further up Monk's Hill. Work still to be carried out and delayed due to winter weather.
- Worked with WSCC to address road and traffic issues in Aldsworth.
- Had the closed churchyard memorials and yew trees surveyed.
- Purchased a new Speed Indication Device for Monk's Hill using Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding from CDC and SDNPA.
- Responded to approximately 50 planning applications and, when we had objected, attended the CDC Planning Committee to share our concerns.
- Maintained the recreation grounds and children's playgrounds at Monk's Hill and Mill Road. Installed a new memorial bench at Monk's Hill recreation ground.
- Worked with the Westbourne Community Trust regarding new affordable housing and replacement of the play equipment at Mill Road.
- Provided financial support for Westbourne Local History Group and Greening Westbourne.
- Contributed to subsidies towards the Bourne Community Bus and the Bourne Heritage Trail.

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Cllr Hitchcock said that was not all. He said residents could keep up to speed with the Parish Council's work by reading the regular reports of monthly meetings in the Westbourne Magazine, as well as additional articles focusing on aspects of the Council's work. In addition, three times a year, a Parish Council newsletter was delivered to every household in the Parish. Minutes were available on the noticeboard in the Square and on the comprehensive website, and further information was posted on the Parish Council's Facebook page. Finally, residents were welcome to attend meetings, held at The Meeting Place in North Street at 7.15pm on the second Thursday of the month. There was no excuse for not knowing what was going on!

Cllr Hitchcock said that if you wanted to help out in any way, perhaps by becoming a co-opted member of a committee, to contact the Parish Clerk for further information or have an informal chat with one of the councillors. Contact details could be found at www.westbourne-pc.gov.uk A financial report was available which is included in Appendix 1.

4. Report from West Sussex County Council: County Cllr Andrew Kerry-Bedell gave his apologies as he was unable to stay for the rest of the meeting. Cllr Hitchcock read a short report, and in summary, the Bourne Community Bus was still working successfully. The County Council had rolled out a new speed policy and Westbourne had submitted 10 traffic regulation order applications for speed changes on local roads. We had experienced the highest rainfall since 1836 and Cllr Kerry-Bedell had formed a Bourne Flood Prevention Group to address issues. Cllr Kerry-Bedell was working on HGV restrictions (except deliveries) in Westbourne to prevent unnecessary through traffic which was using the village as a rat run. Road safety measures had been planned for Aldsworth and it was hoped they would be installed in October. Cllr Kerry-Bedell was also lobbying for more police presence in Westbourne.

5. Report from Chichester District Council: District Cllr Roy Briscoe said he would like to thank the people of Westbourne for supporting him at the election last year. He hoped they had re-elected him because they thought he had been doing a good job in representing residents. Cllr Briscoe said he had continued his work supporting and representing residents at the Council, but not much had changed yet and mainly the policies that had been started by the previous administration had been ratified by the new one. The role of the district councillor was to set a strategy for how Council Tax was spent. The District Council took a total of £186 on an average Band D property, with the remainder going to the County Council, Police (£253 on an average Band D property) and the Parish Council. Cllr Briscoe said the District Council delivered a good service for the money, providing 80 services including emptying bins, planning, licensing, revenue and benefits, housing and many others mainly community-related. The big issue at present was around planning and they had been working on the Local Plan Review for the last seven years. The housing numbers in the current Local Plan were considered to be out of date which was why the policy carried no weight planning-wise. As such, developers could play the system and even when the District Council refused applications, they could appeal the decision and someone with no local knowledge appointed by the Planning Inspectorate would overturn decisions. Cllr Briscoe said the planning system was broken and the Planning Inspectorate was not fit for purpose as numbers should be set locally not by the government. The biggest issue was housing numbers and both

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the Conservatives and Labour had committed to building 300,000 homes per year, with the Liberal Democrats wanting to build 380,000. The District Council had to use a rogue algorithm to work out how many homes they had to deliver with no consideration for the fact that 70% of available land was in the SDNP and another 10% was in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty where housing could not be built. In addition, another 10% of the District was susceptible to flooding and could not be built on. This left the District with mainly building on the east-west A259 corridor. Cllr Briscoe said he had done his best to make sure Westbourne took the minimum amount of development, which was 30 houses over the next 15 years. 12 of which were included in the affordable homes proposed at Mill Road. Other development would be on the sites identified in Westbourne's Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Briscoe said the District had been told that they needed to take 650 homes per year, but the recent Local Plan Review has said they can only take 575 per year and no more due to congestion on the A27 through Chichester. Infrastructure such as sewage, schools, GP's and water supply were stressed and not fit for purpose in many cases, but the Planning Inspectorate would not accept that argument. The reason the Local Plan Review has taken so long to submit, and as a consequence made the District susceptible to speculative development, is because statutory consultees keep changing their minds. Cllr Briscoe said he hoped it would be submitted by the end of April and accepted by the examiner. Cllr Briscoe said the Conservation Area around the Cemetery extended to protect its setting. He was also working to increase the width of the Wildlife Corridor to include behind Whitechimney Row to the East. Cllr Briscoe said he had spent a lot of time working with the Friends of the Ems to reduce Portsmouth Water's abstraction of 20mega litres per day at Walderton, which caused the River Ems to run dry in the summer months. Cllr Briscoe said that Portsmouth Water had made the River a priority but we would have to wait to see what that actually meant. Sadly, Nick Rule, a driving force in the Friends of the Ems had passed away this year he would be sadly missed. Cllr Briscoe gave his thanks to him and his nearest for the help and support they had given.

6. Reports from local community groups and organisations: Cllr Hitchcock welcomed updates for the following community groups and organisations.

Westbourne Community Hall: Margaret Lashley

Margaret said that they had improved facilities at the hall and had increased their funds. This has been done by the rent paid through groups and classes using the Hall, and parties and concerts that had been held. There was now a children's nursery on the first floor of the Hall from 8am to 6pm, running 52 weeks of the year. The next plan is to improve more flooring and replace the kitchen.

Westbourne WI: Jenny Brown

Jenny said the club was thriving and very sociable with over 70 members. They were now meeting at Westbourne Community Hall which meant they had more space and were able to accommodate more members. A new resolution was to create a campaign and they had chosen to discuss rivers and clean water. The WI was not just about cake and tea, and they had a monthly meeting with speakers and sub groups including singing. They had supported the recent Open Gardens event providing tea and cakes to attendees, and also supported Westbourne's Horticultural Show each year. They had also recently raised funds for Tuppenny Barn.

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Westbourne Community Trust: Frank Campbell

Frank said that the WCT was formed five years ago to deliver affordable, socially rented homes to local people. It had worked in partnership with the Parish Council who had two representatives on its board. There were 110 members locally. Frank said it had been a frustrating year as, although planning permission had been granted in early 2023, they had not been able to progress the project due to the increased cost of borrowing money. The scheme had been funded by public grants from Chichester District Council and Homes England but they also needed a loan. Due to inflation, the cost of that loan had become unachievable and beyond their means. The Trust had been able to source another grant from a local charity which helped to overcome these issues and revise their financial plan. It is hoped that the project will start later this summer and they will soon be able to finalise the contractor arrangement. An access had been created from Foxbury Lane to the site to avoid site traffic using the village roads. This work had to be done early before the bird nesting period started as hedges needed to be cut back. As part of the scheme, the Trust would be upgrading the recreation ground and play facilities. Due to financial constraints, the total amount available for new facilities had dropped so the Trust were now looking for new grants to increase the spending back to original value. In response to a question, Frank said that there would be 12 affordable homes and a waiting list would be opened once the houses had been delivered.

Westbourne Church Restoration Trust: Mary Galloway

Mary said the Trust were grateful for any financial support to help protect Westbourne's only Grade 1 listed building which was a fabulous church and churchyard. They were working on raising money towards roof repairs which were very costly. They also had a new website www.westbournechurchrestoration.org

Westbourne Church: Marjorie Kipling

Marjorie added that it was the north face of the Church roof on the nave that was to be repaired, which was roughly half of the total roof area. Banners would be put up in the village soon to support fundraising. There had been some delay to the works due to bat survey. Marjorie said that the Sunday School was very popular with young people at the moment and they also had a lot of visitors.

1st Westbourne Scouts: Roy Briscoe

Roy said the group, based on Akela Way off Mill Road, was one of the oldest in the District, and for the last 45 years Derek and Glynis Chaffer had been the cornerstone - Derek as Scout Leader and Group Scout Leader, and Glynis who had run Cubs for most of that time. Both had been recognised with the Silver Acorn Award, one of the highest in Scouting. Simon and Ann Bartlett had taken on the roles of Scout Leader and Cub Leader over the last few years, and they had reinvigorated the group with new ideas and enthusiasm to the extent that there were 36 scouts, almost as many Cubs and 20+ Beavers. Pete Moore had stepped down as Beaver Leader and they were looked for a replacement and would be interested in new volunteers. Just over a year ago, with the support of Simon and Derek, they had set up an Explorer Unit called Principia run by James (Jim) Bratt. That was starting to blossom and grow and the young adults would be doing some very exciting activities; Roy said that at that

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age all sorts of opportunities opened up to them. Roy said a big thank you to all uniform and non-uniform leaders and helpers. He was proud to be Chairman of the Group, but also to have plenty of support from the trustees who they would not operation successfully without them. Roy said the scouting movement was a fabulous organisation, giving opportunities to youngsters that they would not normally have. This integrated them and built their personal skills to become valuable members within the community. Roy thanked the regular financial donors who supported the group in so many ways, but they still fundraised for equipment, maintenance, activities and trips away. Roy said the biggest fundraiser was the hire of the marquee. Roy thanked everyone involved again.

Ems Valley Community Transport: Dave Thomson

There were 12 drivers who took turns to take people to appointments, and they were still interested in hearing from people who would like to help. It was a rewarding service which helped those in need of transport, and there were social outings for the drivers. When a resident signed up, they would be visited by the secretary who would assess the transport needed and if it was safe for them to travel. The drivers would take them to the appointment and waited for them, which was good as sometimes appointments only lasted 10 minutes and it avoided the hassle of waiting for taxis or buses. More information was available at <https://evctcars.org/>

Greening Westbourne Report: Richard Hitchcock

What has Greening Westbourne done in the last 12 months?

- Continued to look after their community orchard consisting of 67 heritage fruit trees at Hampshire Farm Meadows.
- Worked with Westbourne Parish Council to look after the tree stock in the parish and, where possible, to plant additional trees and hedging.
- Campaigned, through 'Friends of the Ems', to restore the River Ems to its former health, meeting regularly with Portsmouth Water and the Environment Agency.
- Monitored progress with local authority Climate Change Action Plans and, where possible, lent our voice to groups pressing for urgent action.
- Monitored the situation with raw sewage and other nasties being discharged into Langstone and Chichester Harbours and lent our voice to groups campaigning to put an end to this appalling practice.
- Encouraged the people of Westbourne to ensure their homes are well insulated. We have provided 21 people with thermal images of their homes and will be providing them with information as to how to interpret the images and address the identified sources of heat loss.
- Monitored and recorded wildlife (va iRecord), which contributes towards the designation of a wildlife corridor in the CDC Local Plan.
- Held public events, with guest speakers. Our next one ('Saving Energy at Home') is being held here on Friday 26 April.

Ems Valley Memorial Arboretum: Richard Hitchcock

As many of you may know, the first of 250 trees were planted in the Ems Valley Memorial Arboretum (in the northern part of Hampshire Farm Meadows) by the Patron, Major Tim Peake, in November 2022. The EVMA was a joint venture between Emsworth and Westbourne and trustees - as well as those who help out in

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different ways - came from both communities. The second tranche of trees were planted last November and the 120 or so in situ trees included 40 species of tree and nine types of oak! The Ems Valley Memorial Arboretum was on our doorstep, so to speak, and would, in years to come be a wonderful place to while away a few hours in nature. For further information, see <https://evma.org.uk/>

Westbourne Weekend: Ed Bond

NB: Westbourne Weekend were not able to attend the meeting but asked for their report to be included in the minutes

Westbourne Weekend was a local registered community interest group. All profits from the two annual key events were used to fund:

- Purchase, delivery, erection and decoration of the Christmas tree in the Square, as well as purchasing, maintenance and adornment of lights (with help from the local splinter group – Westbourne Woollies)
- Donations to local charities by way of request. They advertised in the Westbourne Magazine and on social media. These have recently included The Meeting Place, Westbourne Primary School and the Ems Valley Memorial Arboretum.

Current key events included:

- Duck Race – River Ems usually towards the end of June: A very popular race using plastic ducks (all counted in and out at the end of each race) starting at the north street bridge and ending at the old Lumley mill branch. Two weeks before the race they walked the river route to ensure there were no obstructions and gave the river a bit of a clean-up (normally inviting “Friends of the Ems” and “Greening Westbourne”)
- Groove on the grass – a one day music festival 1300hrs-2230hrs held at the primary school every summer. They offered live music all day using mainly local bands, local/independent real ales and local food vendors. Free ice creams for the children, BYOB or picnic. They had a 500 people capacity and pre-school children went free.

They were looking to expand the number of events with a potential “October fest” in the very early stages of consideration. They met once a month in the White Horse, depending on the timeline of upcoming events, and they always welcomed new ~~victims~~ volunteers to grow their ability to bring some joy to the local community.

7. Any local issue that has not already been raised: There were no further comments.

8. Date of next meeting: It was agreed to hold the next meeting on Thursday 24 April 2025.

Meeting closed at 9.15pm.

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Appendix 1: Westbourne Parish Council's Finance Report

On 31 March 2024, the Parish Council's Lloyds bank account was signed off with a balance of £129,886.45 and the Unity bank account was signed off with a balance of £88,205.72.

In financial year 2023/24, a Precept of £126,509 was raised through Council Tax for the day to day running of the Parish Council. This includes the maintenance of the two recreation grounds, Westbourne Cemetery and the closed churchyard at St John the Baptist Church, street lighting, street furniture, litter and dog bin collections, a contribution towards the Bourne Community Bus service, donations to the Royal British Legion, Citizen's Advice Bureau and Homestart, and grants to local organisations and community groups. It also covered the cost of general administration, including the internal and external audits, subscriptions, room hire, office equipment and staff costs.

The Council has set aside £154,775 in earmarked reserves to maintain the Council's assets. The Council has £63,317 in general reserves and the internal auditor recommends that this amount should be roughly half of the Precept to safeguard against any financial risk.

Councillors are urged to be cautious of expenditure that has not been precepted for. There is an annual budget that has to be worked to and failure to do so could see the reserve drop too low and put the Council at risk of not being able to function in an emergency.

The Council is now being audited for its activities during 2023/24 and a meeting with the internal auditor, Mulberry & Co, will be taking place in May 2024. This includes looking at its financial accounts, policies, procedures and risk assessments.

The Precept in financial year 2024/25 is £133,264, which equates to £139.89 per year for a Council Tax Band D property.

The Parish Council's financial accounts are available for the public to view at **www.westbourne-pc.gov.uk**