

Minutes



Westbourne

Parish Council

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly of Westbourne Parish which took place at 7pm on Wednesday 23 April 2025 at The Meeting Place, North Street, Westbourne.

Cllr Lade Barker, Cllr Roy Briscoe, Cllr Nigel Ricketts, Cllr Laura Veltom, three members from Emsworth Medical Practice and 45 members of the public.

In attendance: Clare Kennett, Clerk to Westbourne Parish Council

Meeting chaired by Cllr Ricketts.

1. Welcome and introduction: Cllr Nigel Ricketts, Chair of Westbourne Parish Council, opened the meeting and introduced Dr Chinwala from Emsworth Medical Practice.

2. Closure of Westbourne Surgery: Dr Chinwala said that the closure of the Westbourne branch was not a financial decision but one to modernise and futureproof the surgery for the next 40 years. GPs faced many challenges and Emsworth Medical Practice had needed new premises, which it did by moving to the former hospital building on North Street in Emsworth to create a multipurpose surgery. The Practice provided care for over 11,000 patients and there was also a need to recruit new GPs. At first the Redlands Grange site was preferred but this was not a viable option and there was local support for renovating the hospital building which underwent a £4.4m transformation with new state of the art facilities and many consulting rooms. It had enabled them to take on two new partners, as well as physiotherapists, care coordinators and nurse practitioners – none of which could have been achieved without the new premises. Dr Chinwala said the branch in Westbourne was not fit for purpose as it was a house with a surgery downstairs, and it was a logistical issue for staff as it split the team between two sites which stretched the workforce to become less efficient. There was also no wheelchair access and there were safety and practical issues. Demand for Westbourne surgery had fallen since the new practice had opened. It was discussed that Dr Patel had taken on the surgery in the village around 30 years ago to expand his provision which was suitable in those times, but not today. The rooms upstairs were unusable and they could not get a trolley into the rooms. Even if it was renovated, it would still continue to have the same issues.

District Cllr Roy Briscoe said that Chichester District Council took money from developers to invest in community infrastructure and this could be provided. Southbourne surgery had been awarded £450k to upgrade its surgery. Dr Chinwala said that they were a Hampshire based practice and were funded by NHS England. Even if funding was available, there was still the issue of not being able to change the building. The ground floor footprint was small, access was an issue and there

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were only two consulting rooms. Cllr Briscoe said that there was no public transport between Westbourne and Emsworth and it was expensive to get taxis. The elderly and more vulnerable would be impacted. Dr Chinwala said that the surgery had a list of its more vulnerable patients and district nurses were available to support those who were housebound, as well as home visits from GPs. A letter had been sent to all vulnerable people about how they could get to Emsworth. Emsworth Medical Practice was an example of health care in the community. Dr Chinwala said that it was not unreasonable for people to find their way to the Emsworth branch as they would if they had to go to the dentist.

Presentation slides were then shown with data on the proportion of patients in Westbourne and to show that Emsworth surgery was the preferred option for many.

A resident said that appointments were deliberately offered at Emsworth instead of Westbourne which meant that the data was not accurate in relation to real demand from local residents, who preferred going to Westbourne. However, Westbourne was not now given as an option when making appointments.

County Cllr Andrew Kerry-Bedell said that access to healthcare was key and transport in this situation was the problem. The County Council had no control over provision of public transport to the surgery as it was not in West Sussex. The average 1.8 mile journey would cost approximately £5 in a taxi return. There was also the issue of arranging to be collected which meant that it could be a two hour round trip just to see a doctor.

Dr Chinwala said that a decision would be made by the end of the month if the Primary Care Board decided to close it in June. It was not a done deal and would need two rubber stamps.

A resident said that not everyone could access a computer, including for those in some types of employment. The online system for booking appointments made it very difficult for some people and it was impossible to book over the telephone. The e-consult system was poorly designed and the practice needed to look at it. Dr Chinwala said that the system was used by 80% of GPs and was an industry standard.

A resident said that Westbourne surgery was critical infrastructure for the local community and once it was taken away it would not return. Closing the surgery would make the village less sustainable.

A resident said that people would suffer as those who were not classed as vulnerable but still needed help would not have easy access to the practice.

The Parish Council presented Dr Chinwala with a petition of over 700 signatures of local residents against the closure of the surgery.

3. Guest speaker: Cllr Ricketts said that Chichester District Council's Strategic Wildlife Officer had been unable to attend for personal reasons and he sent her the Parish Council's best wishes.

Meeting adjourned at 8pm for an interval of cheese, wine and other refreshments.

Meeting reconvened at 8.30pm.

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4. The Annual Report of the Parish Council: Cllr Nigel Ricketts, Chairman of Westbourne Parish Council, said that at the last Annual Parish Assembly, there was a full complement of nine parish councillors, a phenomenon which was all too rare. Since then, Neil Attewell, Joanna Luckett and Kim Franks had resigned and Richard Hitchcock had sadly passed away and we still very much miss him. There were now four vacancies and the Council was hoping to co-opt two new councillors at the Full Council meeting in June. New councillors would really help the Council to achieve more for the Parish and it would be pleased to hear from anyone else who would like to join. As there had been just five councillors since the autumn, a number of committee meetings had been cancelled and run everything through the Full Council meeting. This was because not all members could be on a committee, otherwise it would be a full council meeting, so if anyone could not attend, meetings have been cancelled. More members would enable committee meetings to take place again and more would be achieved for the Parish. Cllr Ricketts thanked councillors for all their hard work on behalf of the Parish in the last 12 months. They were Lade Barker, Roy Briscoe, Jane Gould and Laura Velton. The Council's thanks also went to Frank Campbell and Kevan Pegley who continued to help with planning matters. Last, by no means least, the Council thanked its invaluable Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, Clare Kennett who had served 10 years in the role. Since last May, the Council has:

- Set up a petition for residents to sign against the proposed closure of Westbourne Surgery.
- Organised a well-attended Spring Clean event on 6 April which was supported by the Final Straw Foundation and Greening Westbourne.
- Hosted the Bourne's Forum formed of the chairs of all parishes in the Bourne's Ward. Invited Katy Bourne PCC to the meeting to speak to her about improvements to neighbourhood policing.
- Been working with our County Councillor in putting together a Traffic Regulation Order to make various road improvements in The Square and Woodmancote which will be submitted to WSCC in July.
- Upgraded the street lights on the East Street/Whitechimney Row junction to heritage-style lamps to match the conservation area.
- Worked with WSCC to address road and traffic issues in Aldsworth.
- Responded to approximately 38 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. This includes regular inspections and survey of the trees.
- Worked with the Westbourne Community Trust regarding new affordable housing and replacement of the play equipment at Mill Road.
- Provided a Community Chest Grant to Westbourne Local History Group and Greening Westbourne. We'd like to hear from other community groups and organisations if they'd like a small grant to support a project.
- Contributed to subsidies towards the Bourne Community Bus and the Bourne Heritage Trail.
- Bought a no-cycling sign for the footpath off Westbourne Road, pedestrian warning signs for the post at the Churchyard near Westbourne Road, and a no-parking sign for outside Colin's Garage.
- Cleaned all the village gateways which will soon be repainted.

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- Working closely with Southbourne Parish Council on the management of Westbourne Cemetery through the Joint Burial Committee.

Residents can keep up to speed with the Parish Council's work by reading the minutes which are published on the website. Meeting reports were available in the Westbourne Magazine, the Council's newsletter was sent to every household and Facebook page which had nearly 700 followers. 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.

5. Report from West Sussex County Council: Cllr Andrew Kerry-Bedell said a thank you to the Parish Council for their hard work and said that of the five council meetings he attended, Westbourne was the best one to come to. Cllr Kerry-Bedell said that this year had been one of change, however the new government had not made any improvement on sewage issues and the increase of new housing development made the situation worse. Devolution would change everything. The County Council had increased council tax but had no choice in doing so with the increasing cost of children's services and adult social care. There was pressure on the budget along with a 40% cut from the government but despite this it was still continuing to be well-run. Devolution would take careful planning and would create a single top tier of authority with huge benefits, a reduction in costs and improvement in services. It would help with innovation tree and give greater purchasing powers. It was likely that a Sussex mayor would want to build a new town in the area instead of piecemeal development as had been currently. The challenges were fast tracking resources and developing proposals by September 2025. Crawley wanted to leave West Sussex and it was not clear what was going to happen but they would hopefully know more by next spring. Cllr Kerry-Bedell said he would represent the County Council for another two years and it was unlikely there would be another election. Cllr Kerry-Bedell said that there had been a lot of highways improvement in West Sussex and community highway schemes had been delivered locally, including to reduce speed on the B2146. Highways improvements had also been made in Aldsworth with a new speed limit, a speed indicator device and more protection for the bridge. Councillors were doing all they could to prevent the closure of Westbourne Surgery, and if it did go ahead, they would ask for better transport solutions. However, Emsworth Medical Practice's decision to close the surgery was likely to do with resources and finances.

6. Report from Chichester District Council: Cllr Roy Briscoe thanked people for attending the meeting and said that Cllr Ricketts, the Parish's Chairman, had done a wonderful job stepping in where Richard left off. Cllr Briscoe said he had been honoured to represent residents on the District Council over the last year, which he believed was true local government. However, this government had pushed onto the District the prospect of becoming a Unitary Council which was a combination of both the functions of district/borough councils and the County Council. Which in some respect, made it easier as there would be one councillor to contact about any issues. It would also streamline things with less staff required so a cost saving measure. However, Cllr Briscoe said this would be at the cost of true local democracy. He spent about 25 to 35 hours per week on matters, and with county council responsibilities that would increase the workload. Anyone who was in full time employment would not be able to perform the role. Local government reorganisation had taken up quite a bit of time recently and he apologised as he had also had a few

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health issues recently. Cllr Briscoe said that the District Council had approved the extension of Rolls Royce which was a major employer locally. The District's Local Plan review was finally submitted seven years after it was started. In the first five years of the Plan, the Council had to deliver approximately 575 houses per annum, then through the new national planning policy framework (NPPF) algorithm, it would increase to 1306 per annum after. Development would need to go in about 15% of the District area as it excluded the South Downs National Park, Chichester Harbour and flood zones. The only place to build was along the A259 corridor and most residents did not want the development as it was changing the vernacular of the area - that of small rural villages. All this with little or no regard to infrastructure.

Portsmouth Water continued to increase their abstraction from the chalk aquifer at Walderton causing the River Ems, a rare chalk stream, to dry up now as far as Westbourne village itself. Cllr Briscoe thanked the Friends of the Ems for their unwavering efforts to save the river. Cllr Briscoe went out regularly with members to determine the health of the river, which had declined considerably. The river used to flow year-round from Walderton with fish in it, now they claim it was winterbourne above Ell Bridge at Racton. Southern Water continued to dump untreated sewage into the harbour, although they were lining the pipes to prevent water ingress from groundwater to prevent the system being overwhelmed - they have not reached Thornham yet. Neither water company would object to development due to pressure from the government and the desire to increase profit over the environment was clear to see. They claimed they could not object to development and must connect to the main sewer by law. If they objected, the District Council could refuse to give planning permission and then there would be no application for connection. Several appeals had been lost on this point whereby the Planning Inspectorate said they were the experts not us, but we lived locally and knew the issues, whereas the inspectors were remote and had the power to overturn democratically elected representatives. Access to GP's and medical services - yes, we had a fabulous hospital in St Richards and Cllr Briscoe thanked them from the bottom of his heart which was still going thanks to them, but said that it could not cope with the additional pressures of an increasing population. Cllr Briscoe said that as explained by Dr Chinwala, GPs were looking to close Westbourne Surgery and make vulnerable residents travel two miles further to access to a doctor, without any public transport. Residents had been fortunate this year as most had got their first choice of school, but how far would children have to travel from some of these edge of village developments. In terms of roads, there was traffic chaos when the A27 closed recently and Westbourne ground to a halt. Work was underway to review Westbourne's Neighbourhood Plan which was paused while we took stock of the new policies in the NPPF. Cllr Briscoe hoped there would be additional protections for villages and hamlets. Cllr Briscoe had managed to negotiate Westbourne's housing allocation down from 50 to 30, which included the affordable housing at Mill Road. That meant the Parish had to find space for a further 15 houses. Policing was a hot topic as there were two models - geographical and functional. Sussex had adopted the functional model back in 2014 which directed patrols to areas most at risk and where incidents were most reported. Cllr Briscoe argued at the time that it was a mistake but senior officers had already made up their minds. How often in recent years had residents seen a police officer? It was likened to seeing a giraffe walking through the village, quite an amusing analogy but true. Cllr Briscoe had several meetings recently with the neighbourhood policing inspector and some very senior officers, as a result the neighbourhood policing team had been increased and

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Westbourne now had an allocated PCSO. He has made visits to the Parish in recent weeks after the Parish reported some anti-social behaviour, and had witnessed some on his first visit but they managed to get away on scooters and cycles. The PCSO has visiting more since that day. In relation to rural crime the team had been short staffed but have now recruited and are back up to strength. Hare and deer coursing, damage to crops, driving across fields and equipment being stolen had been the main issues. Cllr Briscoe had put several motions before the District Council against the family farm tax. Cllr Briscoe said that the governments increase to national insurance contributions had left the District Council over £500k worse off and had impacted on the council tax increase. Cllr Briscoe had put forward a change to District Council meeting times to daytime so more people could attend but was voted down, and also he put one in last month asking that the District Council commissioned a report on Southern Waters waste treatment plants and combined sewage outlets and capacity but officers convinced him to reconsider and look at an alternative whereby a public meeting might be the way forward. Cllr Briscoe was considering a motion where the District Council looked at taking a civil action out against the Environment Agency regarding abstraction licenses by Portsmouth Water. The Environment Agency had a duty to ensure a sustainable supply of drinking water and Walderton was not sustainable. Cllr Briscoe said he had voted against some net zero proposals as he did not see the value, such as putting leaflets in school bags as children already appreciated this and it would just add to landfill. Cllr Briscoe said the UK produced less than 1% of the greenhouse gas emissions and was a small player, however, that was not to say that we should not lead by example.

7. Reports from local community groups and organisations

1st Westbourne Scouts

Roy Briscoe, Chairman, said the Scouts were brilliant, fabulous, fantastic, super and magnificent. He was so proud of the youngsters and leaders. With their leadership they had won nearly all the Scout competitions they have entered, and not only had they won, but often the second and third teams had come second. Scouts learn wonderful skills which will help them in later life as they transition from children to adults. Roy Briscoe was pleased that they offered scouting from Beavers at six years old, through to Cubs, Scouts and then Explorers at age 18. Even after that some stayed on as young leaders before going on to university, but by that time they were well prepared for their future journey in life. Most sections were full but if you had a child or knew one that might benefit, just contact the section leader. Derek and Glynis had been an integral part of 1st Westbourne and had both served in various roles for over 47 years each. Derek had intimated he may stand down as lead volunteer, which was more commonly known as the Group Scout Leader. Scout headquarters had made changes to titles and the governance which was difficult for old hands like Derek and himself to come to terms with. New computer records were becoming onerous and complicated and it was hoped that it did not put people off volunteering. Roy Briscoe thanked Derek and Glynis for all their help and support and more importantly to the children. He hoped they stayed on as uniform assistants, and maybe at the next AGM, Derek would consider becoming President. Ann and Simon Barton were the Cub and Scout leaders respectively and make a great team, Tom Walby now ran the Beaver group and Pete Hooley, the Explorer Unit. Along with other uniform and parent helpers they were a formidable group leading to the

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success they were generating. Roy Briscoe said his heartfelt thanks went to all of them as without them there was no group, and they will influence generations to come. They are awesome. Roy Briscoe said he was also supported by Doug Moody, the Treasurer, and Mel Starr, a real star, as secretary, along with parent reps on the trustee board – his thanks went to all of them as they all help in the efficient running of the Group. Of course, the Scouts did need to raise funds so thank you to all who had donated, including Mr Schofield and Mrs Lashley, both ardent supporters of the Group. Mr Schofield had generously donated to ensure equipment was maintained and safe for use. And Mrs Lashley kindly supported with funds from the Henry Smith Foundation, allowing some disadvantaged members to attend camps. Roy Briscoe said he was grateful to all those in Westbourne who helped the group thrive. Roy Briscoe said they would have to replace the roof of the Scout building soon as it was still the old concrete/asbestos type. It was not considered dangerous whilst undisturbed but it needed to be changed to remain safe in the future. It would be a costly replacement as specialist contractors would have to be used and Roy Briscoe was looking to see if a grant could be applied for from Chichester District Council towards the work.

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Alison Greenwood said that there were now about 70 members and they met two Wednesday's of every month at Westbourne Community Hall between 7.30pm and 9.30pm. There was a whole month of activities including a book group, coffee mornings, speakers, trips to gardens, a regular supper club, sharing hobbies, a cinema group and French conversation. It was a worthwhile group and an opportunity to make lots of friends – the more the merrier!

Westbourne Community Hall

Paul Leaning, a trustee, said that the Hall was used by many including a line dancing group, Dragon Fitness, bounce fitness, short mat bowls, the WI, an afternoon club and as a venue for a day time disco. They also help Wemsfest events and a pre-school used the upstairs room. The bar area had been redecorated and they would be doing the main hall soon. They were saving for a new roof as it needed to be replaced and the Parish Council had awarded the Hall with a grant to replace the kitchen facilities to bring them up to date.

Westbourne Open Gardens

Debra Humphris said that the Open Gardens was a bi-annual event which fundraised primarily for Westbourne Primary School. This year, 13 gardens were participating on June 22 between 10.30am to 5.30pm. The WI were providing tea and cakes at the Parish Hall. A special event with guest speaker Will Hardy from Channel 4's Amazing Spaces, and former resident, was being held and this was being promoted by word of mouth.

Westbourne Allotment Association

Steve Arkle, Chairman, said that they now had around 200 members with a turn-over of plots at the beginning of the year. There was a short waiting list. The annual flower show was in the second week of August and was a lovely event. The Association had an excellent relationship with Westbourne Community Trust who were working nearby on the affordable housing scheme and Steve thanked the site manager.

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Westbourne Community Trust

Frank Campbell, Chairman, said the Trust was a local organisation funded six years ago to tackle the affordable housing issue in the village. Frank Campbell said he had spoken about their plans before but at long last they were finally building for local people. The scheme would be completed in October and was on track and on budget. The progress was good and the roofs were now going up and would be weather tight soon. The park improvements to replace the old equipment was underway with a pump track and jogging track. A new storage building would be built on the allotment land for use by both the Allotment Association and the Parish Council who would maintain it in the future. They had recently invited tenants to apply and there had been a lot of local demand with a waiting list of 36 people, although there were only 12 units. Decisions would be made on a clear and robust policy on the basis of need. They would be available for social rent at 55% of market rent and would be cheap for the tenants to run.

Westbourne Church

Reverend Andrew Doye said the church was a significant feature of the parish as a beautiful, old and large building but also as a church. Woodmancote church was also full of charm and character. It had cost a lot to repair the roof at St John the Baptist Church and Reverend Doye thanked the individuals who had contributed. The church was a servant of the community offering Christian worship and outreach, as well as working with other organisations. It was a pleasure to do that and the Parish Hall was also a valued community feature. The church was open to all in the community and would help as many people as it could.

Community Speedwatch Group

Kevan Pegley said that changes were afoot regarding the reduction of speed limits locally, but the fact was that many people ignored them. The only thing people could do was to police speeding themselves. The Community Speedwatch Group was not about enforcement but having a presence on the streets and the power to send out letters to speeders which had an effect. There was a small number of volunteers and more were needed for about one hour per month. It was a good and positive thing to be involved with and made the community a nicer place to live.

Ems Valley Memorial Arboretum

Having an information table at the Westbourne parish fete last summer was greatly appreciated. This was arranged by our late trustee, Richard Hitchcock, who, as so many other local groups and organisations must also know, was very greatly missed. Thanks to Richard, this elicited a good level of interest, questions and the opportunity to talk to local residents and visitors, many of whom did not know about Hampshire Farm Meadows or the Arboretum. Further recent tree planting has included three varieties of disease resistant Elms, part of a research project which will be closely monitored. There are also some Black Poplars which have been donated as they are another endangered native species. All the planted trees were mapped on the website www.EVMA.org.uk and could be accessed by the tree locator. Volunteer help was much appreciated and arranged through Cath and Neil Mant of Friends of Hampshire Farm Meadows who organised the work parties. They

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could be contacted through their Facebook page. It was lovely that a local dog walker had stopped to help with the watering last week and called her husband who cycled over to join in. The timing of onsite labelling is being considered in conjunction with developing the educational aims of the trust. Trustee Guy Schofield, recently presented the Rev Andrew Doye with one of the In Memoriam binders which was now located at the back of St John the Baptist Church, Westbourne. A second binder was in Emsworth library (currently closed following the fire) and the third would be presented to Emsworth Museum. Plans were in hand for the installation of two benches, discreet signage and a further matching sign which would include the in memoriam plaques and an information board. It was hoped to have an article included in the Westbourne Magazine with details when dates were available and this information would be on the news section of the website. The EVMA was very grateful for the support of Westbourne Parish in this joint Westbourne/Emsworth community project in such a variety of ways. This anticipated the planned involvement of Frank Campbell when he was slightly less busy.

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

9. Date of next meeting: Thursday 23 April 2026

Meeting closed at 9.30pm.