



Minutes of the Full Council meeting of Westbourne Parish Council which took place on Thursday 8 January 2026 at 7.15pm at The Meeting Place, North Street, Westbourne.

Present: Cllr Roy Briscoe, Cllr Jane Gould, Cllr Nigel Ricketts, Cllr Peter Watterson and Cllr Michael White.

In attendance: Cllr Andrew Kerry Bedell, West Sussex County Council
Cllr Roy Briscoe, Chichester District Council
Clare Kennett, Clerk to the Council

Meeting chaired by Cllr Ricketts. No members of the public and one member of the press were present.

01/26/115. Apologies for absence: Cllr Lade Barker and Cllr Jennie Scott.

01/26/116. Declarations of members interest:

- a. There were no declarations of interest.
- b. There were no requests for a dispensation.

01/26/117. Open forum: There were no comments or questions.

01/26/118. County Councillor's comments and questions: Members thanked County Councillor Andrew Kerry-Bedell for the report circulated before the meeting, which was **NOTED**. In summary, Cllr Kerry-Bedell had been researching the proposed solar meadow and had received a positive response from the Church Commission who owned the land. There was still a connection cost to resolve and there was another meeting next week to go through everything. The meadow, proposed for land to the east of Whitechimney Row, would be close to the wildlife corridor and the Church Commission may be interested in using the land for something different other than housing. They had also won prizes for renewable projects. Cllr Kerry-Bedell said that WSCC Highways had responded about road safety plans for The Square which was very encouraging and they thought that the road width was sufficient for a path near the Stags Head. It was discussed that if they approved the community highways scheme application, the finer detail of the proposals would need to be resolved. Cllr Kerry-Bedell said that Mayoral elections had been cancelled until 2028 which would leave a six-week gap where no one was responsible in West Sussex. It was also not known until later in January if the County Council elections would be postponed. Cllr Kerry-Bedell said that the government had reduced support for solar and renewable policies for new homes due to pressure from developers which showed that they were not a good government for housing building standards and the environment, including for sewage issues. Cllr Kerry-Bedell said that it looked like the doctors' surgery in The Square would be opened as a private surgery. Cllr

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Kerry-Bedell asked members their thoughts on what should be done about this. WSCC Highways had said that the traffic regulation order for River Street did not meet the criteria as it had only scored 14 points and it needed a minimum of 20. It was discussed that they had taken out any support from the Parish Council and the results showed that using the data did not work. As this was the third application, members discussed that it proved that there was a problem but each time it was turned down. Cllr Kerry-Bedell said that WSCC Highways had approved the speed reduction on Whitechimney Row and it would be implemented in around six to eight weeks.

01/26/119. District Councillor's comments and questions: District Councillor Roy Briscoe said that local government reorganisation had been a nightmare and what was happening with local elections was not good for democracy. Once the new unitary authority was set up, there had to be a 12 month shadow period with existing councils still in operation, but that would mean councillors staying in post longer without being elected. The government postponed county council elections last year as it thought there would be mayoral elections in 2026, but it was likely they would be postponed this year too. Cllr Briscoe said that the government had reduced funding to the District Council by £1.2m for financial year 2026/27 to support other poorer and urban councils. As a result well-run councils were being penalised. The only option would be for the new unitary authority to increase Council Tax as it would have to catch up with other places such as Worthing which was the highest in the area. Cllr Briscoe explained that the District Council used to get a rural grant as it was more expensive to run services in rural areas but it had been stopped. This meant that the District Council had to reduce its commitments and other projects had been put on the backburner to make up for the shortfall. The District Council was also using some of its reserves, which were healthy, to ensure it was spent locally rather than in the new unitary area. For example, Worthing was in debt so it was likely that the District Council's reserves would be redistributed there in future. Cllr Briscoe said that the District Council had approved an enterprise and innovation centre using £6m of reserves. It was discussed that Innovate UK had cut 40% of its funding so there was now virtually no support for small businesses or set-ups, so this initiative was welcomed. Cllr Briscoe had held a meeting with the police, the Rural Crime team, the Police Crime Commissioner and the Deputy Chief Constable. They admitted that the District Council's Westbourne Ward area (which included Compton and Stoughton) had been recognised as a hot spot for crime and they had sent out more patrols. They had recently ceased a car and charged a driver for poaching offences. Cllr Briscoe said that the wet weather had restored the River Ems and the springs had started breaking. The water stopped at Walderton then started again about 12 miles down stream which showed that too much water was being abstracted.

01/26/120. Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 11 December 2025:
Members **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the minutes as a correct record which were signed by the Chairman.

01/26/121. Clerk's report: The Clerk said that in addition to day-to-day workload, since the last Full Council meeting she had responded to the District Council's request for more information for the grant application for Monk's Hill. Also, she had responded to an enquiry about dogs not being allowed at the children's playground at Monk's Hill. All other items of work were on the agenda for discussion.

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01/26/122. Annual review of fees and charges: Members considered the report which outlined the Council's fees and charges. It was **AGREED** to charge Westbourne Allotment Association £650 per annum in rent for the allotment site given the recent investment in the storage building. There were no other changes.

01/26/123. Finance:

- a. Members **NOTED** the budget report to 31 December 2025 which outlined that receipts were 128% of the budget and payments were 69% of the budget.
- b. Members **NOTED** the earmarked reserves and bank reconciliations to 31 December 2025. The Lloyds account closed with a balance of £128,914.17, the Lloyds saving account closed with a balance of £40,448.59 and the Unity Bank account closed with a balance of £92,143.45.
- c. Members **AGREED** for the Clerk to transfer £80k to the Lloyds savings account to generate more interest. The Clerk said she would investigate other bank accounts to spread the Council's risk regarding the financial services compensation scheme.
- d. Members **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the list of payments, see Appendix 1.

01/26/124. Budget and Precept 2026/27: Members considered the draft budget for financial year 2026/27 prepared by the Clerk and discussed at the Full Council meetings in November and December. It was **NOTED** that the Joint Burial Committee had not provided their budget so members **AGREED** to allocate a 4% increase on the previous year's amount up to a total of £12,848. The Clerk had received confirmation from the District Council that community infrastructure levy funding could be used for the fence improvements at Hitchcock Close playground and therefore an amount towards the project did not need to be included in the budget. Members **AGREED UNAMOUSLY** to set a budget and Precept for financial year 2026/27 at £151,663. This amount was raised through Council Tax to pay for the services the Council provided. Compared to £141,473 in the previous year, it was an increase of 8.2% for a typical house in Council Tax Band D. The Clerk would inform the District Council of the amount required and would publish the budget on the website.

01/26/125. Financial risk assessment and asset register: Members **REVIEWED** the circulated documents and **APPROVED** them with no further comments.

01/26/126 Correspondence: Members **NOTED** the list of correspondence. Members commented that one of the public space protection order signs at Hitchcock Close had been knocked off the post and the Clerk said she would collect it and give it to Longmeadows to put up again. It was **NOTED** that there was only one bin at Hitchcock Close playground and that the District Council had stopped installing new bins. Cllr Briscoe said he would look into the issue to see if another bin could be installed as there were previously three.

01/26/127. Items to be included on the next agenda: Further to agenda item 12/25/101 (11 December 2025), it was **AGREED** to include an item on the Flag Policy which Cllr White had drafted. It was also **AGREED** to include an item on the Business Plan.

01/26/128. Date of next meeting: Members **RESOLVED** to hold the next meeting on Thursday 12 February 2026 at 7.15pm.

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01/26/129. Confidential business: Members **RESOLVED** to exclude the public and press, in the view that publicity would prejudice the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business or arising out of the business about to be transacted – Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

01/26/130. To discuss any outstanding matters relating to:

- a. The Clerk informed members that there was no further update on the draft lease agreement with the Allotment Association.
- b. Members **AGREED** to appoint Churchers Solicitors in Fareham to act on the Council's behalf regarding the purchase of the playground at Hitchcock Close from Westbourne Community Trust. The quote received was £1,250 ex VAT plus any disbursements (Land Registry fee and ID verification). Another quote had been received from Glanvilles who gave three options with the cheapest at £1,850 ex VAT.

Meeting closed at 8.30pm.

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Appendix 1: Payments for approval

**Westbourne Parish Council, 8 January
2026**

Agenda item 123d: Payments for approval

(DC: Debit Card, DD: Direct Debit, BACS: Internet Banking, C: cheque inc. cheque number, PC: payment by petty cash, * earmarked reserve).

| Payments for approval | | Total | Net | VAT |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| DD | O2 mobile phone Jan 26 | 19.34 | 16.12 | 3.22 |
| BACS | Confidential payments Jan 26 | 1,849.24 | 1,849.24 | 0.00 |
| BACS | WSCC LGPS Dec 25 | 543.55 | 543.55 | 0.00 |
| BACS | Microshade cloud storage and email accounts Jan 26 | 147.34 | 122.78 | 24.56 |
| BACS | MS 365 Jan 26 | 9.72 | 8.10 | 1.62 |
| BACS | Lloyds bank service charge Jan 26 | 4.25 | 4.25 | 0.00 |
| BACS | GM Support playground inspections Jan 26 | 200.00 | 200.00 | 0.00 |
| BACS | Longmeadows quarter 3 Hitchcock Close and Monk's Hill maintenance | 2,806.70 | 2,806.70 | 0.00 |
| BACS | SLCC membership 2026-27 | 376.00 | 376.00 | 0.00 |
| BACS | Woodhorn Group play bark for Monk's Hill playground 7m3 | 1,122.00 | 935.00 | 187.00 |
| | | 7,078.14 | 6,861.74 | 216.40 |

Payments for retrospective approval

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|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| BACS | Clear Councils insurance update to include Hitchcock Close equipment | 83.72 | 83.72 | 0.00 |
| BACS | Information Commissioners Office | 52.00 | 52.00 | 0.00 |
| BACS | | | | |
| | | 135.72 | 135.72 | 216.40 |