



Westbourne

Parish Council

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Minutes of the extraordinary Full Council meeting of Westbourne Parish Council which took place on Monday 26 October 2026 at 7.30pm at The Meeting Place, North Street, Westbourne.

Present: Cllr Lade Barker, Cllr Andrew Kerry-Bedell, Cllr Nigel Ricketts, Cllr Pete Watterson, Cllr Michael White.

In attendance: Clare Kennett, Clerk to the Council
Karen Hassan, Assistant Clerk to the Council

Meeting chaired by Cllr Ricketts. 25 members of the public and one member of the press were present.

10/26/83. Apologies for absence: Cllr Roy Briscoe sent his apologies which were accepted. No apologies were received from Cllr Dawn Hayter.

10/26/84. Declarations of members interest:

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

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7.35pm

10/26/85. Open forum: A member of the public asked if the consultation on the proposed closure of the Co-op in Westbourne Parish had been promoted in the local media and Cllr Ricketts said that it had, in the Chichester Observer, and the Parish Council had promoted it via social media and the meeting notice had been displayed on the noticeboard and website.

Cllr Kerry-Bedell explained that Southern Co-op was losing money at its 290 stores and had no choice but to accept what members had wanted which was to merge with Co-operative Group Limited. A difficult decision had been made to close some stores and Westbourne had been earmarked following a review by the Competition Market Authority (CMA) which had identified there being a monopoly in the local area. The CMA had set criteria in the proposed sale to keep the same level of services (groceries, Post Office and ATM) in any future bid for the store, which was welcomed, and it was likely that Nisa, Premier or Lonsdale could be an alternative. It was unlikely that it would be one of the bigger supermarkets as they already had other stores locally.

It was discussed that the CMA's consultation had only been for a two week period and there was no notice of the consultation, that the Co-op served the community of Westbourne which was a separate community to the store on Southleigh Road, and that there was no local public transport - it was 1.6 miles to Emsworth and difficult to get to Southleigh Road. It was discussed that if the CMA could not find a new retailer

who provided the same services, it may be that the Co-op could remain open. It was discussed that the store was profitable and there was good footfall, although it was acknowledged that shoplifting was a problem as well as difficulties for the lorry that delivered to the premises. It was discussed if a community shop could be set up which was agreed to be a good idea but in practice would need a lot of volunteers to run. It was discussed that the Co-op leased the property and that it had been there since 1956.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting at 7.55pm

10/26/86. Potential closure of Westbourne Co-op: Cllr Ricketts read out the circulated draft resolution to members which set out the Council's grounds for objection to the proposed closure of the Co-op. A vote was carried out, proposed by Cllr Ricketts and seconded by Cllr Barker with all in favour, and members **AGREED** unanimously to send it to the Competition Market Authority. (See Appendix 1)

It was **NOTED** that there were currently 1,156 signatures on the petition that the Council had promoted via Facebook.

10/26/87. Items to be included on the next agenda: There were no additional items.

10/26/88. Date of next meeting: To resolve to hold the next meeting on Thursday 12 November 2026 at 7.15pm.

Meeting closed at 8.25pm

Appendix 1: Agreed resolution send to the CMA regarding the potential closure of Westbourne Co-op



Address for correspondence:

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Jeremy Chan
Principal Case officer
Competition Market Authority

26 October 2026

Sent to: jeremy.chan@cma.gov.uk

Dear Jeremy

FORMAL MOTION OF OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE CO-OPERATIVE STORE IN WESTBOURNE, WEST SUSSEX

Motion

Westbourne Parish Council hereby records its **strongest possible objection to the proposed closure of the Co-operative convenience store in Westbourne** and calls upon the Co-operative Group and the Competition and Markets Authority to suspend any closure decision immediately while all reasonable alternatives are fully explored, in consultation with the Parish Council, local residents and neighbouring businesses.

The Council considers that the loss of the village's only central convenience store, Post Office, personal and business banking facilities and ATM would cause significant and potentially irreversible harm to the wellbeing of residents, the economic vitality of the village and the long-term sustainability of our rural community.

Grounds for objection

1. Loss of the village's only central convenience store

The Co-op is the only centrally located convenience store and Post Office serving a village of approximately 2,400 residents, plus those from neighbouring rural communities and villages to the north with no Post Office including Stoughton, Walderton, Funtington, West Ashling, Racton, Lordington, West Marden, East Marden, Compton, Forestside and Deanlane End. Its closure would remove an essential local Post Office and banking service and leave residents without access to a convenient source of groceries and household goods.

This is not simply the loss of a commercial premises. It is the removal of a vital part of the village's infrastructure, upon which residents depend for their day-to-day needs.

2. No public transport and no realistic alternatives for many residents

Westbourne has no public transport service to provide residents with a practical alternative for accessing convenience stores or a post office elsewhere. The closure also imposes a disproportionate burden on those 10% of residents who do not drive or with no access to private transport, and 500 residents over 80 or disabled (Census/ONS data).

The Council considers it unacceptable that residents should be left without access to essential shopping facilities because of the withdrawal of the village's only central convenience store. In addition, the routes to alternative stores are on narrow roads with limited footways, making it dangerous for both pedestrians and cyclists to get to them.

3. Serious consequences for elderly and vulnerable residents

The Council is particularly concerned about the impact on older residents, people with disabilities, those with limited mobility and people living alone.

The proposed closure has already caused distress among residents. A woman in her eighties has contacted her local District Councillor expressing genuine concern that she may no longer be able to remain living in Westbourne because she cannot travel to alternative shops. Many more have contacted this Parish Council with similar concerns. The Council's petition has received 1,156 signatures since it was promoted to the local community just one week ago.

The Council considers it deeply troubling that residents who have spent many years contributing to village life should be placed in a position where the loss of a local shop threatens their independence, dignity and ability to remain in their own homes.

The closure risks increasing social isolation, dependence on others and pressure on families, neighbours and community support services.

4. Damage to neighbouring independent businesses

The Co-op is an important anchor for Westbourne's local retail economy. Other village shops and businesses benefit from the footfall it generates, with customers often visiting several establishments during the same trip.

Its closure could significantly reduce visitor numbers, undermine the trading viability of neighbouring businesses and contribute to a wider decline in the village centre.

The Council is concerned that the loss of the Co-op could initiate a damaging chain reaction of reduced footfall, declining business revenues and further closures, weakening the economic foundations of the village.

5. Threat to the long-term sustainability of Westbourne

A sustainable rural community requires accessible essential services, a viable local economy and the ability of residents of all ages to live independently.

Removing the village's only convenience store, in the absence of public transport, would force those able to travel to make additional journeys to obtain basic provisions, potentially increasing car dependency, transport costs and emissions. Those unable to travel would face an even greater loss of access to the essential fresh, good quality, sustainably and ethically sourced and reasonably priced goods our residents value.

The Council considers that the proposed closure is fundamentally at odds with the objectives of sustainable communities, social inclusion, reduced car dependency and the maintenance of viable rural settlements.

Westbourne must not be allowed to become a village where residents are expected to live without reasonable access to good quality ethically and sustainably sourced food and the goods and services necessary for a decent quality of life.

6. Inconsistency with the Co-operative movement's founding principles

The Co-operative movement was founded in 1844 on principles of mutual support, collective benefit, service to people and communities and people over profit. Westbourne Co-op has been running since 1956, providing local and good quality goods for 70 years.

The Council questions how the withdrawal of the only central convenience store from a village of 2,400 people, with no public transport and a significant number of residents dependent upon local access to groceries and daily essential services, can be reconciled with the Co-op's founding ethos of being created by the people, for the people.

While the Council recognises that commercial organisations must consider their financial position, it believes that the wider social and economic consequences of this decision must be given serious and meaningful consideration.

A purely commercial assessment that fails to account for the consequences for vulnerable residents and the wider village community would be wholly inadequate.

7. Failure to explore all reasonable alternatives

The Council does not accept that closure should be treated as inevitable until the Co-operative Group has demonstrated that all reasonable alternatives have been thoroughly examined. We have identified two other Co-op stores that should be considered instead.

That the Competition and Marketing Authority has got it wrong and failed to take into consideration the impact on a rural village and the residents

Possible options could include revised opening hours, changes to staffing or operating arrangements, a different retail model, partnership arrangements or other practical measures to retain the essential convenience store and Post Office in the village.

The Council calls for meaningful engagement with the community before any final decision is implemented.

Resolutions

Westbourne Parish Council therefore resolves:

1. **To formally and unequivocally oppose the proposed closure** of the Co-operative store and loss of the Post Office in Westbourne and to record its strongest objection to the loss of this essential village service.
2. **To demand an immediate suspension of the closure process** by the Co-operative Group and Competition and Marketing Authority until a full and meaningful review of the social, economic and environmental consequences has been undertaken and all reasonable alternatives have been explored.
3. **To request an urgent meeting** with the Co-operative Group's senior management, including the Group Chief Executive's office and the management responsible for Food Retail, to discuss the proposed closure and identify a viable way forward. To insist a representative of the Competition and Marketing Authority attend the meeting to explain their rationale in their decision making process.
4. **To demand a full assessment of the community impact**, including the consequences for elderly and vulnerable residents, people without access to private transport, neighbouring independent businesses and the long-term viability of Westbourne as a sustainable rural community.
5. **To call upon the Co-operative Group and CMA to work constructively with the Parish Council, local councillors, residents and business representatives** to investigate every reasonable option for retaining the store or securing an equivalent accessible local grocery and Post Office provision.
6. **To request written clarification of the reasons for the proposed closure**, including the basis for the decision, the alternatives considered and the measures, if any, proposed to mitigate its effects on the Westbourne Parish community.
7. **To write formally to the Co-operative Group's senior leadership and Board**, enclosing this resolution and requesting a written response within 21 days.
8. **To notify the relevant local district and county councillors, the local Member of Parliament and other appropriate public bodies** of the Council's objection and request their support in securing an outcome satisfactory to all parties.
9. **To investigate appropriate further avenues of representation**, seeking guidance from the Competition and Markets Authority or any other relevant bodies where matters fall within their respective remits.

10. **To publicise the Council's position to residents** and invite evidence of the likely effects of the closure or change of retailer, ensuring that the experiences of older, vulnerable and less mobile residents are properly represented.
11. **To request that no irreversible steps be taken towards closure** while discussions and the exploration of alternatives remain ongoing.
12. **To continue pursuing all reasonable avenues available to the Parish Council** to protect access to essential local shopping facilities and safeguard the wellbeing, independence and future sustainability of Westbourne.

Statement of principle

Westbourne Parish Council believes that the loss or risk to the village's only central convenience store, Post Office, personal and business banking services and ATM would be a serious blow to the whole community, disproportionately harming those least able to adapt, and potentially undermining the viability of other local businesses in Westbourne.

The Council does not consider it acceptable that a village of 2,400 people, without public transport to alternative convenience stores or Post Offices, should be left without a central convenience store before all reasonable Co-op store alternatives are explored.

The Co-operative Group is urged to recognise its wider responsibilities to the community it serves and to work with local representatives to find a sustainable solution.

Westbourne is a living community, not simply a trading location. Its residents deserve to retain access to the essential services that enable them to live independently, support one another and sustain village life.

Westbourne Parish Council therefore calls upon the Co-operative Group and CMA to reconsider its proposal, suspend the closure process and engage urgently and constructively with the community to secure the future of this vital local service.

The petition which currently has 1,156 signatures can be found at <https://c.org/pPXDrPvJqf>

The resolution was approved at the Full Council meeting of Westbourne Parish Council on 26 October 2026.

Proposed by: Cllr Nigel Ricketts

Seconded by: Cllr Lade Barker

Resolution outcome: Carried unanimously

Votes for: 5 **Votes against:** 0 **Abstentions:** 0

Yours sincerely



Cllr Nigel Ricketts
Chairman of Westbourne Parish Council

cc.

Jess Brown Fuller MP: jess.brown-fuller.MP@parliament.uk
The Board of the Co-operative Group: crexec@coop.co.uk
The CMA Case Team: coopgroup.southerncoop@cma.gov.uk
The CMA: general.enquiries@cma.gov.uk