

# WEST HATCH PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting of the West Hatch Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023

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## **23/01 Election of Chairman**

Cllr Read was proposed as Chairman by Cllr Middleton and this was seconded by Cllr Finlayson. It was unanimously agreed that Cllr Read should continue as Chairman for the forthcoming year. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was duly signed.

## **23/02 Attendance and apologies**

**Councillors:** Read, Finlayson, Knight, Middleton, and Walters

**Public:** 1 parishioner, Cllrs Henley and Wakefield (Somerset Council)

**Apologies:** Mrs S Read (Tree warden)

## **22/03 To co-opt Richard Sullivan to the Council**

It was unanimously agreed to co-opt Richard Sullivan to the Council, to fill the vacancy caused by Mr Kerr's resignation. Unfortunately, Mr Sullivan was unable to be present at the meeting due to work commitments.

## **23/04 Election of Vice-Chairman**

Cllr Middleton was nominated as Vice-chairman by Cllr Read. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Finlayson. There were no other nominations and Cllr Middleton was unanimously elected as Vice-chairman.

## **23/05 Appointment of Councillors to head statutory, standing, and other committees or working parties:**

The Council approved the following appointments:

- a) Planning Committee – Cllr Finlayson
- b) Conservation and Nature – Cllr Sullivan, assisted by Mrs Sheila Read
- c) Footpaths – Cllr Haskin ( subject to agreement)
- d) Finance – Cllr Middleton

### **23/06 Appointment of delegates or representatives to external Associations:**

The Council approved the following appointments:

- a) Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) – Cllr Walters
- b) Somerset County Council – Highways Contact – Cllr Knight

### **23/07 Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **23/08 Matters arising from the minutes.**

- **Update on Kings Coronation Events**

This was a very successful event with a good attendance. Coronation Mugs were presented to the children in the Parish.

- **Update on formation of Local Community Networks (LCNs)**

It is anticipated that the first meetings of the LCNs will take place in June/July. The resourcing of the LCNs is in progress and each LCN will have a 0.5 FTE paid official. Parish Councils will be advised of the date and venue of the first meeting in due course.

### **23/09 To receive the annual accounts for 2022/23**

The accounts for 2021/22 were received by the Council. Total receipts were £5815, which included a CIL receipt of £1890. Payments totalled £7422, which included the sum of £4086 paid to the Village Hall from the Re-opening grant money of £6500 received at the end of the previous financial year. The Parish Council reserves stand at £6954, of which £2400 is the remaining balance of the grant funds.

### **23/10 To receive the internal audit report for 2022/23**

The internal audit report was presented to the Council. There were no areas of concern. The Council's internal control document was reviewed and approved

### **23/11 To approve Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23**

The Council approved Items 1-9 of Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

### **23/12 To approve Section 2 of the 2022/23 Accounting statements.**

The Council approved Section 2 of the 2022/23 Accounting Statements.

**23/13 To confirm that the Council wishes to certify itself as exempt from the limited assurance review.**

The Council confirmed that it was eligible to certify itself as exempt from the limited assurance review and that it wished to do so. The Certificate of Exemption was signed by the Chairman and Clerk.

**23/14 To review and confirm the insurance arrangements for 2023**

Zurich insurance has offered to renew the insurance on the existing terms of £214.00. The Council agreed to renew the insurance for a further year on these terms.

**23/15 To review and confirm the risk assessment for 2023.**

The Council reviewed and confirmed the risk assessment for 2023.

**23/16 To review and confirm the Council's Financial Regulations and Internal Audit Controls**

The Council confirmed that the Financial Regulations and Internal Audit Controls were adequate and appropriate.

**23/17 Parishioners' Forum**

A parishioner raised a concern regarding the requirement for bat surveys to be undertaken prior to planning applications being considered. The cost of a survey is not insubstantial and whilst the need for a survey is acknowledged, this could be made a condition of planning approval. It was agreed that the Council would flag this issue to the Planning Authority at a suitable opportunity.

**23/18 To receive reports from County Councillors (if present)**

Both Somerset Councillors - Ross Henley and Sarah Wakefield were present and gave a report.

There has been no further development with the A358 proposals but both Councillors indicated that their support for the Community of Parishes remains unequivocal.

The £2 cap on bus fares will remain in place until the end of October and indications are that bus usage has increased.

Somerset Council is asking residents to sign-up for its new climate newsletter. The new Somerset Council cross-county monthly newsletter was launched near the end of April, and you can sign-up to receive it on the Somerset Council website:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/environment-and-food-safety/climate-and-ecological-emergency/newsletter-sign-up/>

**23/19 To confirm that an application to delete ROW 31/34 from the Definitive Map should be submitted to Somerset Council**

The Council confirmed that an application to delete ROW 31/34 from the Definitive Map should be submitted to Somerset Council.

**23/20 To confirm receipt of Precept 2022/23**

The Clerk confirmed that the precept of £3350 had been received

**23/21 Formal Expenditure Approval**

It was resolved to make the following payments:

a) Clerk's Salary	£325.00
b) Zurich Insurance	£214.00
c) Village hall - Grant	£2520.74
d) Coronation Mugs	£ 249.75
e) CPRE	£45.00
f) Somerset Wildlife Trust	£30.00

**23/22 Planning – to consider any planning matters arising.**

The Council has received one planning application since the last meeting:

**47/22/0006** – Variation to conditions relating to Abbeywood, West Hatch.

The applicant has submitted various amendments to the original proposal including a reduction in the length of the building and alterations to the materials used.

The Council supports these amendments.

**23/23 Reports of Parish Council Working Parties**

- a. Report from Footpath leader.

With regard to Footpath 31/26, the cost of diverting the footpath will be between £1500-£2000 and it is unlikely that the landowner would wish to pay this.

- b. Report from Trees/Conservation leader

The following report from the Tree Warden was presented to the Council:

“Preservation and health of trees is increasingly in the news for their importance in combatting adverse climate conditions and helping to improve soil health. Just as importantly, their intrinsic majesty, beauty, colour, flowers, food, shelter and overall

importance for wildlife and human enjoyment is something which has probably been under appreciated for a long time.

The 'Ancient Tree Forum and Register' is an organisation which records ancient or veteran trees. The definition of exactly which these are varies from variety to variety, depending on the rate of growth and longevity, so that a slow growing species such as oak or yew will not reach 'veteran' status as soon as a faster growing beech. We have a 100+ year old Perry Pear tree which has veteran status because it is exceptionally large and old for its type.

If you know of a wonderful or vulnerable tree which you think we should record to keep safe, get in touch and we can measure and retain the record. Also, if such a tree is under threat it can be given a tree protection order, (TPO) by the council to ensure it is not felled because it looks aged, or for development purposes (such as a road scheme!) or damaged by overenthusiastic lopping. Old trees can lose their crowns and then regrow to an extent.

We have recently measured the Yews in West Hatch churchyard, two of which will hopefully gain veteran status; the others aren't quite large enough yet, even though already a couple of hundred years old.

Stoke St Mary, North Curry, and Orchard Portman, among others, already have churchyard yews recorded so we need to catch up! My aim is to create a 'notable tree' map for the Parish.

Other matters

a) Concern has been expressed about the tall trees on the corner of Griffin Lane and West Hatch Lane, which are on Council land. I have emailed Somerset Council but have not yet heard what they intend to do about their height. b) The village hall committee states that they have recently planted trees in the parish but hasn't specified exactly where or what species. It would be useful to know the details to help create new records of Parish trees both old and young".

c. Report on Highway matters

Somerset Highways has confirmed that Church Lane and West Hatch Lane are under consideration for surface dressing in 2024/25. There is a scoring system that is needed to match work to the available budget and all sites will be assessed shortly.

d. Report from SALC representative

Nothing to report.

**23/24 To consider implementation of litter picking event.**

The Council would like to arrange a litter picking event if there is suitable interest within the Parish. The Council would provide litter pickers and other equipment. The

Clerk will circulate details in the Parish Magazine and via the Village Network, asking for volunteers and a date could then be set during the summer.

**23/25 Correspondence and matters of report.**

- **Defibrillator at Village Hall**

The new Defibrillator has now been installed on the side wall of the Village Hall. The code for access is on the side of the cabinet. The Council thanked Mr Kerr for his work in arranging and installing the item.

**23/26 To agree date of next meeting.**

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July at 7,30pm

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.