

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN WESTMILL VILLAGE HALL on Wednesday 17 May 2023 at 7.00pm

Outgoing Chair WPC: Michael McRae
Clerk: Sarah Kubica

Present: 7 members of the public

23.01 Minutes of 2022 Meeting

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 18 May 2022 were signed as a correct record.

23.02 Report from the outgoing Chair of the Parish Council

Westmill Parish Council again held 4 formal parish council meetings over the past financial year. We had a full council with 6 councillors and were guided and supported by Sarah Kubica our Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer.

Sarah as the only employee of WPC, continues to make a significant contribution to the running of our council, which is appreciated by us all. She is efficient, well respected and is a great asset to our parish council.

During the past 18 months a considerable amount of time has been spent on the unauthorised development that occurred on Cherry Green Lane. A retrospective planning application was submitted by the occupants (or their agent), for this site, but today still no decision has been made by planning on this application.

This has caused considerable concern to our residents and WPC has continually requested updates from East Herts District Council (EHDC), regarding this long outstanding planning issue.

All other planning applications that relate to our parish are received and circulated to each parish councillor for their comments and consideration, responding to EHDC where necessary.

Many residents have expressed concerns about the speed of traffic through the village. We have involved the police who came to carry out a speed check. They then reported back to us that all traffic was within the speed limit. However, as far as we are aware this was only done on one occasion and the police were very visible, so naturally drivers would be inclined to slow down and drive within the speed limits.

WPC supports the campaign '20's Plenty' and has participated in Zoom meetings involving interested parties. Unfortunately, Hertfordshire County Council – who are responsible for Highways, are reluctant to introduce this initiative to various towns and villages in Hertfordshire at this time.

WPC intend to continue to push forward and participate in this campaign with a view of eventually implementing it in Westmill. We have also lobbied our County Councillor and will continue to do so to try to move this forward.

Fly tipping continues to be an ongoing problem, not just to Westmill, but around the county. One of our councillors reports fly tipping issues to EHDC and they are usually responsive and remove rubbish within a couple of days.

Potholes are also reported to Highways, who then assess the damage, send us a report and endeavour to repair within a few days, however, these are usually just filling the hole in, which in several cases requires further attention after a relatively short time. (In some cases these are more like a temporary repair). We have also continued to push Highways to repaint several of the white lines that have become difficult to see at road junctions in the village.

WPC continues to be responsible for the village greens, the village pump and its housing, Lime trees on the wide verge down the main street, the village defibrillator, located in the old telephone Kiosk which was purchased from BT for the sum of £1.00 in 2018!

We are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of this 'old style' Grade II listed telephone kiosk; therefore we had a complete repaint job done last spring.

This month - May 2023, WPC along with other town and parish councils – came to the end of its 4

year term of office. Therefore a 'new' parish council will be officially formed at the WPC Annual Meeting this evening.

This will be made up of 3 parish councillors who served in the previous term and 3 new councillors, who take up their responsibilities from tonight.

Moving on to the Greg Trust (GT) which owns and manages several of the village assets, including our Grade II listed Village Hall, Children's Playground, Village Allotments, Recreation Field, adjoining grazing field, along with 3 cottages – which again are all Grade II listed buildings.

The Trust was run over the year by the same 5 trustees, that all made a significant contribution to manage and maintain these important village facilities.

This year is the Centenary of the GT, which was initially set up by Mary Greg in 1923, although the village hall was converted from a hay barn by Thomas and Mary Greg in 1901 and donated to the village for social and community purposes. So the hall is now into its one hundred and twenty second year as a village hall!

An exhibition to mark this significant anniversary will be held in the village hall over a weekend at the end of July. (Bernadette will provide more information during the GT update at the WPC meeting this evening).

Towards the end of 2022 the Trust was approached by a long standing Westmill resident, to enquire if the GT would be willing to own and accept responsibility for a grazing field located in the centre of the village, which they had owned for many years.

This field was originally owned by the Greg's, but was bought by this resident's grandfather from Mary Greg in 1923. The transaction was concluded at the end of March 2023, so 100 years later it is returned to an association with the Greg's again.

The intention is that the field will continue to be an open space, used for grazing purposes, but a section of the field will be made available for residents to enjoy, which is located alongside the Twitchell copse, just off the village green.

We are pleased that a village resident has provided some interesting activities for the village children in The Twitchell. This includes wooden notices showing the type of tree on several of the trees in this area, constructing a bird watching area and children's play areas. This was a good initiative and is enjoyed by many young children. It's now a regular visiting point for the Nursery children to visit and learn from.

The Westmill Facebook page and the Westmill WhatsApp group is welcomed by residents and helps to communicate what is happening in the village and provide information that residents find useful. The village croquet club, set up as a community activity initially in Covid times, has continued to be well supported and meets weekly even through the winter months. Thank you to those residents who set this up and to ensure it continues to provide exercise and enjoyment.

Finally, I just want to thank my fellow parish councillors for your support, assistance and cooperation during my terms of office.

I wish our 'new' parish council best wishes for the future in looking after our beautiful village.

This concludes to chairman report for the year April 22 to March 23.

23.03 Open Session

Open session, no matters were raised.

23.04 The meeting closed at 7.10pm