

WEST DOWN PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES
West Down Parish Hall
Wednesday 4th September 2024 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs S Ayre (Chair), M Reeves (Vice Chair), R Kenshole, H Knight, S Tanton, T Verney and S Whitby

Also present: C Cllr Davis, D Cllr Wilkinson, Val Ford (Clerk) and 2 members of the public.

Apologies/Approvals.

None.

5316. Declarations of Interest

None.

5317. Public Participation

None.

5318. Approve & Sign Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 7th August 2024.

The Minutes had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. **Cllr Verney proposed that the Minutes of the meeting held on the 7th August 2024 be accepted as a true record which was seconded by Cllr Reeves.** There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 7TH AUGUST 2024 BE APPROVED AND THEY WERE DULY SIGNED

5319. Matters Arising

5310. (5315) Any Other Business. a) Cllr Reeves referred to the refuse collections in West Down raised at the last meeting. Cllr Kenshole understands that the Supervisor was going to look at the road width. Cllr Kenshole will see if he can find out more and email the Cllrs with any update.

5320. Police Report

Monthly Crime Figures.

The crime figures for June 2024 for Morteheo, Woolacombe, & West Down (including Mullacott & Bittadon) were:-

Violence and sexual offences	7
Anti-Social behaviour	5
Other theft	2
Public order	2

5321. Report from County Councillor.

C Cllr Davis referred to her report (See Appendix A).

C Cllr Davis was concerned about the withdrawal of the Winter Fuel Payment, with the need to get as many people onto Pension Credit as soon as possible. CAB will help people fill in the forms and she asked for it to be publicised as much as possible.

D Cllr Wilkinson referred to the problem of older people often not being able to deal with online applications. Another initiative regarding money available for individuals and businesses in respect of Mobile Phone Signals also needs to be put on Facebook etc.

C Cllr Davis referred to the forthcoming road closure on the A361 at Twitchen Cross for drainage works and railings. There is nothing she can do about this as the work needs to be done. Cllr Kenshole expressed concern about the diversions in place, particularly during school time as a lot of little children will be running around. C Cllr Davis was going to find out what is happening with the bus service during the works and she will get back to us on this.

D Cllr Wilkinson referred to Farmers being concerned. C Cllr Davis referred to there being access for those that need to be in the area. The work cannot be delayed as other road closures are coming straight after.

The Reactive Speed sign was discussed, with various quotes being received. Concern was expressed about the weight of the sign, 23 kg, particularly as it will need to be moved around. C Cllr Davis will find out which sign Bratton Fleming have. To move this on, C Cllr Davis will liaise with the new Clerk and they will come up with a plan and get the money out of the locality budget.

5322. Report from District Councillor.

D Cllr Wilkinson had attended the Planning Committee meeting regarding the application for Forte Field which had been refused. (Beside the Fortescue in Woolacombe). The main issue was the suitability of the site with it being in the middle of an AONB and being a mile and a half from the main village centre with no pavement. This was to include 50 affordable homes but there is already a very good Community Land Trust scheme in Woolacombe which satisfies the housing need for the area. CLT's need to be supported, with the whole ethos being to protect and enhance village life. The latest directive from the Government is that Northern Devon has to build 1,300 homes plus, with infrastructure being a major concern.

Regarding second homes, at the Strategy & Resource meeting in August 2024 a 100% increase in Council Tax was voted for but the concern was where this money would go. Discussion took place about the way people with second homes are getting round paying additional council tax.

D Cllr Wilkinson was going to attend the Coastal Issues Group tomorrow, with the theme he is going for being what has been done, what they are doing and what is still to come. There are wonderful parts in Woolacombe but others not so good. The Head Teacher from Ilfracombe Primary School is also attending as people who live in Ilfracombe having a ten year less life span.

D Cllr Wilkinson was going to attend the Bathing Water Quality Conference in October in Kings Lynn. He will report back after this time.

Discussion took place about S106 money. There was not any S106 Open Space Money on the development next to the Fortescue but there was money for getting rid of water.

Discussion took place about the benefit of Neighbourhood Plans. D Cllr Wilkinson felt these plans work best with bullet points. Cllr Reeves felt this was next down the line for West Down, maybe joining up with Morteheo. D Cllr Wilkinson added that a Neighbourhood Plan is not just a Parish Council initiative, it is the Parish as a whole. Cllr Verney referred to Braunton having a good Neighbourhood Plan which could be looked at to get information.

Discussion took place about the road closure in Ilfracombe and when this should be finished.

Cllr Ayre referred to the S106 money for the Ariel Centre. She had conversations with Lee at the Ariel Centre and also Richard Slaney (Public Open Spaces Officer) from NDC). Lee was aware of this money and they are looking at what to spend it on, with a lot of projects they could do there. Cllr Ayre advised Lee to do this as soon as possible. Cllr Ayre understands from Mr Slaney that people are starting to submit plans for S106. He was talking about low, medium and high level projects and to get them submitted to him. D Cllr Wilkinson recommended having two or three schemes to put forward.

5323. Flashing Speed Signs

Cllr Reeves felt this should now be referred to as Reactive Speed Sign. This item had already been discussed under the C Cllr's report.

5324. Planning Decisions

78673 – Church Cottage, West Down, Ilfracombe, Devon, EX34 8NQ. Approved.

5325. Planning Applications

a) To comment on the following planning applications.

79026 – Prior approval for change of use of agricultural building to one dwelling-house (Class Q(A)(B) at Barn at Stowford Plantation, Bittadon, Ilfracombe, Devon, EX34 8PJ.

Cllr Ayre referred to the access and entry being in West Down Parish but the property being in Bittadon. Cllr Reeves had looked at whether the entrance was safe. It is on a straight piece of road and the entrance is wide and splayed so he did not feel there was any issues with this. There is a long track to the barn which comes under Class Q. It was agreed that the Clerk would put a comment on the planning portal to say that West Down Parish Council have looked at the entrance to the track leading down to the barn conversion on Prieford Road and deem it to have safe vehicle access and egress. The Parish Council had no comment to make on the barn conversion.

b) To comment on any planning applications received after the Agenda was published.

None.

5326. Footpaths

a) To receive information from Cllr Verney regarding work required on the footpaths in the village and grass cutting.

Cllrs Verney and Ayre had walked around the village looking at the state of the footpaths and Cllr Verney took photographs which he will send to the Cllrs. A number of areas needing work were identified and Cllr Verney will put together the

work required to go out to tender. Discussion took place about areas where ownership is unknown and Pulland Bridge needing to be repaired as someone appears to have stolen the upright stone.

b) To receive the outcome of the P3 Grant Funding for 2024/2025.

The Clerk had prepared a balance sheet covering monies paid in for P3 and monies paid out for the last two years which she had sent to Cllrs Verney, Ayre and Reeves. The Clerk sent an email back to Jon Boyd, Public Rights of Way Officer, to advise him that the Parish Council paid an invoice in June 2024 for £1,242 for footpath work in West Down and have also allocated £722 towards grass cutting. Mr Boyd was told that the Parish Council are in the process of collating other work that needs to be carried out which will need to go out to tender. The Clerk subsequently received an email from Mr Boyd to say that he had issued the Parish Council with the basic payment for this year (£220) to supplement the amount in our P3 account. If this is insufficient he said to get in touch and they will determine if there is enough money in the P3 funds to support further.

c) Any other footpath matters.

An email was read out from Mrs Surridge who wanted to express appreciation for her recent stay in West Down. She felt the village was well cared for and had all that was needed with a nice village shop and a super pub. She really appreciated how well cared for the footpaths in West Down were, with easy to see entrances, and felt the park was a great asset to the village. The main thing that struck her was the friendliness of the people who live in West Down and she is already looking forward to returning. This email was circulated to Cllrs and also passed on to the Village Shop, Crown Inn and the Community Park.

Cllr Whitby queried if there was an obligation on landowners to have Public Liability Insurance. Cllr Ayre did not think there would be as footpaths are classed as being on the Highway network.

5327. Grass Cutting and Bus Shelter Cleaning Tender 2025

Cllr Verney was happy to pull a document together regarding a comprehensive review of this tender in time for the next meeting. **Cllr Ayre proposed that Cllr Verney take this course of action which was seconded by Cllr Knight.** There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT CLLR VERNEY WILL PREPARE A DOCUMENT IN TIME FOR THE OCTOBER PARISH COUNCIL MEETING IN RESPECT OF A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE GRASS CUTTING AND BUS SHELTER CLEANING TENDER FOR 2025.

5328. Emergency Plan

Cllr Reeves referred to Andy Odell finishing the Emergency Plan, with a few minor tweaks taking place. In the meantime, Cllr Reeves had spoken to Rod Birtles, Devon Communities Together, to say the final plan was about to be published and to see if there was a chance to apply for funding for walkie talkies. Mr Birtles asked if he could have a copy of the final plan so that DCT could have a scour of this document and the opportunity to comment on it before it is published. Martin Rich, Community Projects Advisor, had a look and commented yesterday. He was quite complimentary but they would prefer it to be on a template common to others. Mr Odell has not commented on this yet.

Cllr Kenshole did not feel it should stop here. He felt that enhancements to the plan can be made as time goes on. Cllr Reeves felt this should be reviewed twice a year in any event.

Rod Birtles said in order to apply for funding for walkie talkies, an application will need to be put in. Cllr Reeves had prepared this document, with the amount coming to £389.95. This is for the walkie talkies recommended which are robust and waterproof. Cllr Reeves will pass over this application form to the Clerk who will add a signature and bank details before sending this off to Rod Birtles before he goes away at the end of the week.

Cllr Reeves referred to Mr Birtles saying they are very interested in the desk top exercise that was carried out in West Down. Cllr Reeves advised him that in the foreseeable future West Down are planning a live exercise which again DCT are interested in.

5329. Car Park Lease

Cllr Ayre had received a copy of the draft Lease which had gone to Samuels Solicitors, with her understanding being that NDC have chased them for a response. There is a site meeting tomorrow morning with various departments of NDC to see if anything needs to be done to the car park before the lease goes ahead. Cllr Reeves noticed that conduits are mentioned in the lease. Discussion took place about the Conditions on use of the land. The lease says no permits can be issued without the approval of NDC.

5330. Air Ambulance Light

The lighting bank purchased by the Parish Council for the West Down Landing Site had now been fitted free of charge by a local electrician. Another alum key had to be purchased for the pole as this has been lost. An email was received from Sue Fallon, Flight Operations Administrator, to say that she has advised the pilots and crew that the lights are fully functional and the 'dark site' notice has been removed. Sue Fallon said the help and support with the landing site is much appreciated by all at DAA.

Cllr Ayre referred to all involved having the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which they are happy with. The only item outstanding is the need to have the lighting tested once a month for an hour at a time. Ben Hookes has offered to do this, but how to record this needs to be looked into.

Money will need to be put in the Budget to contribute to the maintenance of the lighting and it will need to be added to the Parish Council Asset Register.

5331. NDC Climate & Environment Grant

The Grant Fund application form was submitted from the Parish Council on the 15th August 2024 together with supporting documentation in the sum of £7,910 as a joint project with the Parish Hall. £5,270 is for battery storage and £2,640 is for landscaping with hedging and wildflowers on the southern boundary. An email was received from the Grants Team at NDC to say that the application had met their criteria to be accepted for consideration and nothing further is needed from the Parish Council at this stage. They hope to be able to let us know the date of the panel meeting to consider applications in September 2024.

5332. Section 106 Money

This was discussed under the D Cllrs report above. Richard Slaney felt that Developers should be paying up and he strongly suggested that the Parish Council put in low, medium and high value projects, with groups in the village putting ideas together. Cllr Ayre will recirculate the documents that Mr Slaney gave her as well as putting a draft letter together to go out to committees in the village and advise the Clerk who to send this to. This item will need to go on the October Agenda.

5333. Road Safety Markings

The Manager at West Down Community Shop sent an email on 26th July 2024 requesting Road Safety Markings outside the shop. This was read out at the meeting. Following discussion it was felt that this is a Highways decision and Cllr Ayre will check this with C Cllr Davis. The Clerk will advise the shop of this course of action.

5334. Gov.domain emails

Cllr Reeves went on to the zoom presentation about this, with money available for Parish Councils to move their emails to the Gov.uk domain. Cllr Kenshole's personal preference would be not to take this course of action as the current domain works well. Western Web can do either, but there would be a charge if this is changed. If the grant was received it would cover the cost but if not he believes this would be £105. Cllr Kenshole could not see the Parish Council getting many data breaches or phishing and Western Web do a lot of filtering. **Cllr Kenshole proposed that the Parish Council stay as they are with the current domain, unless the Gov.uk domain becomes mandatory, which was seconded by Cllr Verney.** There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE PARISH COUNCIL WILL STAY AS THEY ARE IN RESPECT OF THEIR CURRENT EMAIL DOMAIN AND WILL NOT MOVE TO THE GOV.UK DOMAIN UNLESS THIS BECOMES MANDATORY.

5335. Co-option of Councillor

Cllrs were asked to talk to people they know who may be interested in becoming a Parish Councillor as there is a vacancy for co-option. Cllr Ayre will do a new Facebook page about this. Candidates need to have worked or lived in the village for a year and cannot have been in Prison.

5336. Poppy Wreath

The Clerk advised that the usual medium Poppy Wreath is £19.99 plus £4.50 delivery. **Cllr Verney proposed that the Clerk purchase the Poppy Wreath which was seconded by Cllr Kenshole.** There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE CLERK WILL PURCHASE A MEDIUM POPPY WREATH FROM RBL.

Discussion as to who will lay this will be discussed at the next meeting, with Cllr Reeves offering to do this.

5337. Finances

a) To receive the balance in the bank accounts.

Balance in the Treasurer's Account as at 30.09.2024	£15,349.52
Balance in the Business Account as at 30.09.2024	£ 4,894.61

b) To receive and agree the invoices received for payment.

North Devon Council	Clerks Salary	£395.53	
	Admin Charge	£ 7.72	£ 403.25
Western Web	Annual Renewal of web space and content management licence		£ 96.00
Mrs S Ayre	Floodlight for Air Ambulance Light		£ 261.40
Mrs S Ayre	Expenses (incl prizes for village clean up		£ 66.50
Mrs S Ayre	Key for Air Ambulance Light		£ 7.99
Parish Hall	Room Hire for Interviews		£ 19.00
	Total Payment		£ 854.14

Cllr Verney proposed that these invoices should be paid which was seconded by Cllr Reeves. There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE INVOICES TOTALLING £854.14 SHOULD BE PAID.

c) External Auditor Report.

The Clerk had received the External Auditors Report. There were no matters to give cause for concern from the External Auditor. The Notice of Conclusion of Audit needs to be put up on the Noticeboard and Website, together with relevant sections of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2023/2024, by the 30th September 2024. It is up to individual Parish Councils how long they publish this for. It used to be 14 days and the Clerk suggested the Parish Council keep to this so that nothing needs to be dealt with after she leaves at the end of September. **Cllr Ayre proposed that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit be published for 14 days which was seconded by Cllr Verney.** There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE CLERK WILL PUBLISH THE NOTICE OF CONCLUSION OF AUDIT FOR 2023/2024 ON THE VILLAGE NOTICEBOARD AND PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE FOR 14 DAYS TOGETHER WITH THE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION.

5338. Correspondence

a) Email received from Ron Bailey, UK Parliament, regarding Safety of Lithium ion Batteries and e-bikes and scooters. This was circulated to Cllrs prior to the meeting to see if they support the campaign. Cllr Kenshole stated that if batteries and electric appliances are CE marked they are okay but otherwise not. People should be aware if buying online. Cllr Reeves referred to the second part of the Bill about disposal of lithium ion batteries. He could not see anything to prevent supporting this. **Cllr Whitby proposed that the Parish Council agree to support this Bill**

and share the information as wide as possible which was seconded by Cllr Tanton. There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE PARISH COUNCIL SUPPORT THE BILL REGARDING SAFETY OF LITHIUM ION BATTERIES AS WELL AS THEIR DISPOSAL.

- THAT THE CLERK WILL REGISTER THE PARISH COUNCIL’S SUPPORT ON THE LINK PROVIDED BY RON BAILEY, UK PARLIAMENT.

b) Email received from Debbie at the PTFA thanking the Parish Council for letting her know that the Parish Council were happy for the school to keep the remaining monies from the Small Grant Fund for the items already purchased.

c) Email received from a resident in the village asking if they could pay for a yearly permit to guarantee a parking space in the village car park for their cottage now that the Parish Council are taking over the lease. This had been circulated to Cllrs prior to the meeting. Following discussion on this matter it was agreed that the Clerk would write to the resident and advise them that the lease on the car park is not yet complete but it is unlikely the Parish Council will be allowed to make this provision under the conditions of the lease. **Cllr Kenshole proposed that this course of action be taken which was seconded by Cllr Verney.** There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE CLERK WILL WRITE TO THE RESIDENT IN THE VILLAGE WHO HAD REQUESTED A PERMIT FOR THE VILLAGE CAR PARK AND ADVISE THEM THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THIS WILL BE ALLOWED UNDER THE TERMS OF THE LEASE.

d) Tracey Blackmore, NDC, has confirmed she had put the 2nd October 2024 in her diary for her presentation covering barn conversions under Policy DM27, Class Q applications and fall back position regarding applications. The meeting will commence at 6.45 pm. The Clerk will notify D Cllr Wilkinson that this is taking place and ask him how many people he will be bringing as there may be a need to have the meeting in a larger room.

e) Email received from Devon CC Highways Department regarding the drainage works on the road from Twitchen Cross to Trimstone Cross plus road from Mullacott Cross to Twitchen Cross between Monday 16th September 2024 to Friday 11th October 2024 which will entail a road closure and diversionary route for traffic. This was circulated to Cllrs and put on the Village website and Parish Council website.

f) Email received from Mrs Surrige who wanted to express appreciation for their recent stay in West Down. (Read out under Footpaths above).

g) An invitation had been received for Cllrs to attend DALC’s Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 2 October 2024 at Exeter Racecourse.

h) Cllr Ayre read out a letter given to her from Alison Shelley. Alison wanted to express her thanks for the current Clerk’s assistance in recent years and for her efficiency and kindly manner. She sent her best wishes to the Clerk for her next chapter.

5339. Unresolved Questions

None.

5340. Items to be added to the next meeting Agenda

a) Tracey Blackmore (NDC Planning Department) to give a presentation on barn conversions under Policy DM27, Class Q applications and fall back position regarding applications.

b) Mid Term Accounts as at 30th September 2024.

- c) Pay out Small Grants following the second Precept payment and receipts for the financial year.
- d) P3 – Walking of Footpaths (October to December).
- e) Clerks Appraisal (Part B).
- f) Review Quotation and Tender Policy.
- g) Car Park Lease.
- h) Emergency Plan.
- i) Neighbourhood Plan.
- j) S106 money.
- k) Community Land Trust.

5341. Any Other Business

- a) Cllr Verney referred to the village clean up. Cllr Ayre purchased three prizes and thank you cards and photos of the clean up were put on the Parish Council website. Cllr Verney referred to needing to find out how to contact the road sweeper. John Hookway's later comments were noted that this vehicle had already been out in West Down.
- b) Cllr Ayre reported that Lower Broad Park is now complete.
- c) The Clerk had circulated emails to Cllrs about training, particularly for new Councillors, and asked Cllrs to let her know if there were any courses they wish to attend.
- d) Cllr Ayre sent congratulations to the people involved in putting on the Village Fete in the Community Park which was a lot of hard work for them. Cllr Whitby added that it was a successful day, despite there being an earlier gale and some damage to a marquee.
- e) Cllr Ayre had received a request from a parishioner to see if the Parish Council could look at and consider replacement of the West Down sign on the entrance to the main village from Coombe Hill as this has been hit several times by a hedge trimmer.
- f) Cllr Reeves wanted to officially record the Parish Council's thanks to Val for being a fantastic Clerk over the last three years. Cllr Ayre presented her with gifts and a card from the Parish Councillors as well as a gift and card from Alison Shelley. The Clerk thanked everyone and said working for the Parish Council had been an enjoyable chapter in her life.

PART B – THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE EXCLUDED FROM THIS PART OF THE MEETING.

5342. To discuss the position of new Clerk & RFO.

Cllr Ayre referred to interviews taking place last Thursday for the recruitment of a new Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. There were two candidates, both of whom interviewed well. The position was awarded to Daniel Bleasdale who is Parish Clerk & RFO at Woolacombe and Morteohoe as well as at Kentisbury and Trentishoe. A Contract of Employment needs to be drawn up and the starting salary agreed.

The national annual review of Clerks salaries had yet to be agreed, with the current proposal under review by unions. This will be backdated to April once it is awarded and payment of this will be passed on to the current Clerk once this is agreed.

The meeting closed at 9.15 p.m.