

Selflessness - Integrity - Objectivity - Accountability - Openness - Honesty - Leadership

## West Itchenor Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of West Itchenor Parish Council held on Monday 13 May 2024 at Itchenor Sailing Club commencing at 6.00 pm.

Present: Mr R Dyer, Mr S Hall, Mr L Keep, Mr A Spencer (Chairman), Mr C Watson

In attendance: Mrs C Smith (Clerk), Mr M Chilton (CDC), Mrs E Hamilton (CDC),  
1 member of the public

### **38/24C Election of a Chairman (including signing of declaration of office)**

Cllr Spencer was proposed and seconded for the office of Chairman of the Council. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Spencer be elected as Chairman of West Itchenor Parish Council. Cllr Spencer's Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chairman of West Itchenor Parish Council was duly received.

### **39/24C Chairman's Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Councillors for electing him as Chairman.

### **40/24C Election of a Vice Chairman**

The Chairman called for nominations for Vice Chairman. Cllr Watson was proposed and seconded for the office of Vice Chairman of the Council. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Watson be elected as Vice Chairman of West Itchenor Parish Council.

### **41/24C Public session.**

A resident asked for an update on the sea wall footpath, noting that the Parish Council had stated that it was going to meet with the Environment Agency and try to find out who is owner of the sea wall.

Secondly, Itchenor Sailing Club is reviewing its location given it was flooded over the winter, other issues of flooding were highlighted. The question was raised as to whether the Parish Council had responsibility to take action.

Cllr Keep gave an overview of all the work that has been undertaken to date. Highlighting the difficulties of getting any response from the Environment Agency, the unforeseen ferocity of the tides and the work being undertaken by owners of properties along the sea wall. The Parish Council has been chasing the Environment Agency for three years just to get the grouting along the sea wall repaired. Investigations have discovered that the sea wall was installed by a company, no longer around, in the 1930's and establishing ownership was a technically difficult task. Difficulties surrounding planning permission to undertake any work on the sea wall were highlighted.

The resident indicated that they may be in a position to obtain information from the Environment Agency.

Cllr Watson explained about the work of the pond. And the work being carried out regularly to maintain the pond.

### **42/24C District and County Councillor reports on matters affecting the Parish.**

Mrs Hamilton (CDC) reported on the submission of the Local Plan. The latest flood figures make a lot of the land, where planning had been approved, unsuitable. There was some uncertainty about the viability of sites with outline permission where the flood figures have changed. Southern Water has now relined the sewers from West Itchenor to Birdham. Other items on the next District Council meeting agenda were highlighted.

Mr Chilton (CDC) reported on the recent refusal of planning permission for Stubcroft Farm. There had been ten key points and the biggest of these was flooding. It was too late for the Church Lane developments, but there will be difficulties with the drainage plans. Having the Local Plan submitted now is helpful.

Planning services at the District Council have not been rated well, due to the level of cases overturned on appeal. Although the District Council is safe for this year, if too many appeals are allowed, then the Planning Inspectorate may take over the planning functions. Performance on normal planning applications is not good. A review of the planning department is starting along with a two-year pilot of AI to assess planning applications.

The issue of homelessness was also highlighted. There are currently two dedicated properties in Chichester for homeless people and with the costs of putting people up rising, CDC has now taken on a lease of a site in Bognor. Consideration is being given to a third centre in Chichester.

District Councillors were asked if there was any movement on the establishment of recycling food waste and why CDC and WSCC appear to fight each other over recycling targets. A big project is being put together on food waste. There have been issues with collection vehicles, staffing and capacity at Westhampnett, but it was hoped that new collection vehicles would be ordered soon. There have been issues with government grants for waste and recycling which have resulted in pressures between the District and County Councils.

Planning permissions that have been granted with conditions on surface water, if regulations change is CDC in contact with Southern Water about dealing with this. There was some uncertainty about this.

**43/24C Apologies for absence.**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Mead-Briggs.

**44/24C Declarations of Interest and Code of Conduct.**

Declarations of interest on any items on the agenda.

None.

Dispensation requests made to the Parish Clerk

None.

**45/24C To confirm the appointment of the Responsible Financial Officer**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk continue as the Responsible Financial Officer for the Parish Council.

**46/24C To appoint Standing and Statutory Committees**

It was **RESOLVED** that there should be two Standing Committees and one working party, and that membership should be as follows:

Planning Committee

Cllr Watson, Cllr Mead-Briggs, Cllr Dyer and Cllr Spencer.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Hall and Cllr Keep be nominated as substitute members who could stand in should any member of the Planning Committee be unable to attend a meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Mead-Briggs be the Planning Committee Chairman for the forthcoming year.

Staffing Committee

Cllr Mead-Briggs, Cllr Hall and Cllr Watson

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr be the Staffing Committee Chairman for the forthcoming year.

Environment Working Party

Cllr Watson and Cllr Keep

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Watson be the Chairman of the Environment Working Party.

**47/24C To appoint Parish Council representatives to outside organisations**

On a proposal from Cllr Keep it was **RESOLVED** that the following appointments be made.

WSALC, Cllr Spencer

CDALC, Cllr Mead-Briggs

Manhood Peninsula Partnership, Cllr Watson

SWiSH meetings, Cllr Keep and Cllr Watson

#### **48/24C Policy Adoption and Review**

The Clerk explained that it was necessary for the Parish Council to regularly review the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and other adopted policies. Revised Financial Regulations had been published last week and a review of these would take place at the July meeting.

On a proposal from Cllr Watson, it was **RESOLVED** that the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and other adopted policies continue to be used. Reviews of policies will be scheduled throughout the year.

#### **49/24C Minutes**

The Chairman called for the approval of the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 11 March 2024. It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes as presented be confirmed as a true and correct record of the meeting and they be duly signed by the Chairman.

#### **50/24C Actions update.**

Updates on actions agreed at the last meeting were given.

#### **51/24C Planning Committee meetings**

The Minutes of previous planning meetings were noted.

After discussions with the applicants and a site visit in was agreed to confirm the decision to withdraw an objection to a planning application for a greenhouse at Orchard House.

#### **52/24C The Common.**

An update on the planning application for the work at the entrance to Travis Perkins was given.

It was noted that despite previous agreements the Christmas tree had yet to be removed. A brief explanation of the situation surrounding the tree was given. It was agreed that Cllr Keep would speak to local residents again so that the tree could be removed.

Concern was raised about the parking on the common and the bins still being out near Pond cottage. After some discussion, it was agreed to cordon off the areas being used.

#### **53/24C Environment Working Group.**

##### Pond

The MWHG conservation team have again worked hard to clear areas of the pond for us. There is a significant growth of Hemlock Water Dropwort growing at present which ideally should be cut down/removed. This toxic invasive plant is a potential hazard to people and animals walking through it. The water level fluctuates with the ambient rainfall. I shall be starting to monitor the outfall for AART, (on a monthly basis) once they send the kit.

##### Verges

These continue to be damaged by constant wear from delivery vehicles and large lorries/tractors, not just during the wet weather. Where damage has occurred due to contractor vehicles, we hope that the homeowner will make good once the work is finished. Tim Keen has almost finished the 'wildflower' planting, with different mixes, increasing the area this year.

##### Common

The eastern area of the common at the southern end has now been planted with 3 substantial oak trees. These will soon be fitted with a porous collar which will reduce the need to 'carry' water some distance regularly during hot weather.

A question was asked about the dredging of the pond. Cllr Keep explained what had taken place and the purposed of the dredging. This will be revisited every 5/10 years.

#### **54/24C External meetings**

Arun and Rother Rivers Trust meeting, Cllr Watson had attended and gave a brief update on the work being undertaken regarding pollution of local rivers.

#### **55/24C The sea wall.**

Further to meetings with the contractors at Orchard House photos are available of the work that has been undertaken and how this was affected by the recent storms.

It was suggested that the Parish Council looks at getting a tidal meter. Currently the closest is Cambermet and information was not consistent for the parish. The Sailing Club is happy to have a conversation about location. Cllr Keep agreed to look at costs for this project. Quotes from surveyor to do spot height readings were being sought. Any scheme on the sea wall needs to go far enough round to be effective. It was considered important to get spot height readings and the Sailing Club want to do this too. It was hoped to share the resource.

Orchard House, work on the sea wall was reviewed. The fence has remained but plugs exposed. Additionally, a wall round to Pier Point House has gone in. The contractors were agreeable to working with the Parish Council to share designs. It was noted that it would be useful to check the Environment Agency's list of approved contractors.

#### **56/24C Clerks Report.**

The Clerk reported that the Itchenor Sailing Club was not available for use on the scheduled July meeting date. Options were given and it was agreed to book the Itchenor Memorial Hall for 7.30pm on the 8 July 2024.

The Clerk gave a verbal report on the recommendation to move from a .org.uk website and email address to a .gov.uk website and email address. It was agreed to change the website and emails to westitchenorparish.gov.uk.

The Clerk reported that Cllr Clarke had not been attended meetings since 13 November 2023. Neither had there been any apologies sent. Therefore, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, Section 85 (1), her position as a member of the West Itchenor Parish Council must be declared vacant due to her failure to attend any meetings or submit apologies for a period exceeding six consecutive months. This was noted.

#### **57/24C Finance.**

##### **57.1 Financial report on the year ending 31 March 2024**

The Clerk reported on the Parish Council's position at the end of March 2024. Between the two accounts there was £61082.68. Of this £20,852.69 was earmarked CIL funds and £13,087 was earmarked for the sea wall, leaving £27,143.31 in general reserves.

##### **57.2 Internal Audit Report for the year ended 31 March 2024**

The Internal Audit report had been circulated to Councillors. There were no issues raised, but the Clerk reminded that on a quarterly basis a Councillor should check the bank statement against the bank reconciliations. Thanks were given to Cllr Watson who had done this during the past year.

##### **57.3 Annual Return 01/04/2023 – 31/03/2024 – Annual Governance Statement**

Copies of the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1 of the Annual Return) were circulated. It was **RESOLVED** that Questions 1 to 8 be answered Yes, question 9 be answered N/A and that the declaration be duly signed by the Chairman and Clerk.

##### **57.4 Annual Return 01/04/2023 – 31/03/2024 – Statement of Accounts**

Copies of the Accounting statements for 2023/24 (Section 2 of the Annual Return) along with the bank reconciliation and statement of accounts were circulated. It was **RESOLVED** that the accounting statements 2023/24 be approved and that the declaration be duly signed by the Chairman.

##### **57.5 Dates for the exercising of elector's rights**

The dates for the exercising of the electors' rights were agreed and Cllr Spencer agreed to place the notices on the noticeboards.

##### **57.6 Three-year contract for internal audit services from Mulberry LAS Ltd**

It was **RESOLVED** that the proposed three-year contract with Mulberry LAS Ltd be approved.

##### **57.7 Staffing Committee recommendation on the Clerk's pay scale**

On a proposal from Cllr Watson, it was **RESOLVED** to increase the Clerk's salary scale from Spinal Point 31 to Spinal Point 33, with effect from 1 April 2024.

- 57.8 Regular payments made by direct debit and standing order  
Councillors were asked to confirm the continued payment of the following payments by Standing Order or Direct Debit.  
Standing orders: Staff Salaries, Pension Contributions  
Direct Debits: Mobile phone rental, Data Protection Registration

It was **RESOLVED** that the Standing Order and Direct Debit payments for the year be authorised

- 57.9 Schedule of Payments and Receipts  
On a proposal from Cllr Watson, it was **RESOLVED** that the schedule of payments totalling £5668.93 be authorised for payment.

- 57.10 Bank reconciliation  
On a proposal from Cllr Spencer, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the bank reconciliation.

- 57.11 Budget monitoring statement  
On a proposal from Cllr Spencer, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the budget monitoring statement.

**58/24C Items for the next Parish Council meeting.**

Co-option of a councillor. Rospa survey.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.30pm

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman

Date: \_\_\_\_\_