WESTWELL PARISH COUNCIL
In the Beautiful Garden of Kent
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Westwell Parish Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council
Held on Wednesday 4 February 2026 at 7pm, Westwell Village Hall, Westwell

1. **Open Forum**
   No members of the public were present.
2. **Present and apologies**
   Present: Cllrs Bainbridge (chair) Drury (vice-chair), Ward, Wyatt, Hutchinson Bartlett, Farrington and Lister. Clerk – Sonia Young.
   Apologies: Cllrs Richards.
   Also in attendance Kent County Cllr Jeremy Eustace.
3. **Declarations of Interest**
   Cllr Drury neighbour to Item 12) 12.1.1 Potters Corner highways safety improvements.

4 **4.1 Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2026 and matters arising.**
Resolved:
That the minutes of the meeting of Westwell Parish Council held on 14 January 2026 be approved and confirmed as a true record.
Proposed: Cllr Bartlettt. **Seconded:** Cllr Ward. **All in agreement.** Cllr Hutchinson abstained as not present at the January meeting.
Resolved:
It was resolved to approve the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

4.2 Matters Arising

4.2.1 Westwell broadband provision
Cllr Bainbridge has written (again) to ABC to query the roll out of broadband across the borough and what phase will include Westwell as prior correspondence from ABC in October 2023 indicated that Westwell might begin to draw some positive benefit from Project Gigabit – the £112m spend on increasing broadband provision in Kent & Medway – by 2024. ABC replied to advise that it shared WPC's frustration but did not have any details from City Fibre about the roll out in Ashford Borough. However, ABC will advise WPC as soon as it receives that information.

4.2.2 Extension of the proposed 20mph speed limit out to the village gates
Cllr Bainbridge will write to the resident who has asked that any proposed reduction in the speed limit to 20mph be extended out to the village gates.

4.2.3 Salt bin to Tutt Hill
The Clerk has requested a new salt bin for Tutt Hill, but KCC replied to say that there has been a two-year ban on the purchase of new salt bins.
Resolved.
That WPC purchase a parish-owned salt bin for Tutt Hill
Proposed: Cllr Drury. **Seconded:** Cllr Lister. **All in agreement.**
Resolved.
It was resolved to purchase a parish-owned salt bin for Tutt Hill.
Action: Clerk to source and purchase bin. Base of the bin to be loaded with cement slabs to hold it in place. Delivery to Cllr Wyatt ahead of installation.

4.2.4 Debris in St Mary's Churchyard
The PCC has started removal of the building debris – a process it expects to complete by April.

4.2.5 Meeting area PC - PC Aaron Hopkins

PC Aaron Hopkins' shift pattern does not allow him to attend one of the fixed WPC monthly meetings, so he has proposed alternative dates to meet WPC Cllrs.
Action: The Clerk to circulate proposed dates and fix a date to suit as many Cllrs as possible.

Decision Items

5 5.1 Planning applications received for comment

None received.

5.2 Update on Planning Matters in progress

5.2.1 Works at the Sandbar Business Park

Cllr Bainbridge arranged an introductory welcome meeting for the owner Amir Alyev and his manager Riswan Solungi to meet WPC and neighbours Lake House and Holiday Inn on 23 January. This was a continuation and handover of the successful liaison with the contractor Auramis Keblys of ACS. Amir explained his business - the UK and European operation of IKRA will be using the site for the import of Turkish textiles, using the building as a fulfillment centre for onward distribution. The external storage area will be used to store oil and gas industry equipment for export under a contract for BP. Working hours were confirmed as 7am to 7pm. There will be an average of five inbound and outbound HGVs per day; HGVs arriving out of hours will be diverted to the Waterbrook Truckstop. Amir confirmed he had chosen the cinnamon colour and would resolve with Auramis what to do about the brighter yellow installed. Amir noted he is concerned about the road safety of the traffic speeds on the A20. The lighting is agreed but not updated on the ABC portal of OTH/2025/ 0655. The acoustic fencing has been installed and is slightly higher than originally envisaged. Any issues arising as operations get underway will be resolved as they occur via the positive informal contacts now established and reviewed at the next liaison meeting.

5.3 Other Planning Matters

An informal update was communicated at the KALC meeting in January. It revealed that the published timetable of a first complete draft (Regulation 19) by June has been acknowledged as unrealistic due the amount of work still to be done by ABC - and taking into account current large changes in the Planning system including a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published on 18 December 2025 that affects how the plan is written and what policies it can and can't contain. The expected timetable is for informal contact with parishes in spring/ summer and a Reg 19 Draft for consultation in the autumn. The next step is to see this timetable formalised in an updated Local Development Scheme 2026 (LDS).

6. 6.1 Financial Report

6.1.1 Approval of payments for January in accordance with the budget

WPC main account

Expenditure to approve for Feb 2026		Method	£
Salary payment February	Clerk	BACS	946.40
Tax and NI	HMRC	BACS	368.75
Mowing inv 5489	All Seasons Gardening Services	BACS	678.60
Annual external audit			252.00
Removal undergrowth Gold Hill	MJN Gardening Ltd	BACS	600.00
Payroll management	S H Bureau	BACs	60.00
Total			**£2905.75**

Income			
Total			**£00.00**

Bank Reconciliation Balance at 31 January 2026: £14, 249.65 less unpresented cheques as follows:

Actual balance = £14, 249.65 as at 31 January 2026

WPC deposit account

Expenditure			£
Total			**£00.00**

Income			
9 Jan	Interest	BACS	23.75
Total			**£23.75**

Bank Reconciliation Balance £46, 637.33 as at 31 January 2026 less un-presented cheques as follows:

Actual balance: £46, 637.33as at 31 January 2026

General reserve	20111.14
Grant	2, 279
HiP	7,859.42
Deposit	15,937.77
Special reserves: £450 tidy undergrowth Gold Hill	450.00

******Interest added to the General Reserve***

WPC No 2 Account

Expenditure		Cheque No	£
Total			**£00.00**

Income			
Total			**£00.00**

Bank Reconciliation Balance £3.44 at 31 January 2026. Actual balance = £3.44 at 31 January 2026.

Resolved

6.1.1 WPC resolved to approve the accounts as noted and payments in accordance with the budget.

Proposed: Cllr Hutchinson. **Seconded**: Cllr Farrington. **All in agreement.**

Resolved. WPC approved the accounts as noted and payments to be made in accordance with the budget.

Information items

7. **7.1 Correspondence**

   WPC resolved to submit comments individually in response to the call by Katie Lam MP for her constituents to comment on their experiences of South East Water (supply) and send her details. It was also agreed that Cllr Bainbridge would draft a response on behalf of WPC and submit that to Katie Lam MP and copy in all Cllrs.

8. **8.1 KCC Report**

   Kent County Cllr Jeremy Eustace said the KCC budget consultations had concluded and the proposed budget will be discussed within the next week. He said questions had been raised with central government about how Kent pays for the rapidly escalating costs of Children's Services in the county following scrutiny by KCC about how savings might be achieved. He said that in the current financial year, Children's Services will be £50m over budget.

   He confirmed that the budget for next year contains proposals to increase spend on pothole repairs.

   As water pressures are now so low across Kent, Cllr Eustace said that KCC has just given the fire service funds to purchase more water fire trucks so that when they are called out, they have sufficient water and pressure to put out the fire.

Mr Eustace said he had £3k of his annual £6.5k members' grant yet to be assigned to community projects, so if WPC had any community projects to fund, then it should apply within the next few weeks.

9. 9.1 Playground

The new kids' clamber stack has been installed. The post installation health and safety report will take place on Friday. Cllr Bainbridge said he was very happy to say that the additional item of play equipment completed an important parish project – that of revitalising the central recreational area for the parish.

Action: Cllr Farrington will liaise with the Village Hall Management Committee treasurer to organise the transfer of the fund held by the VHMC to improve the recreation area as a contribution towards the costs of the new equipment.

Cllr Bainbridge to apply to KCC County Cllr Eustance for additional grant funding - also to be put towards the cost of the new play equipment.

10. 10.1 Cemetery

10.1.1 Memorial health and safety checks

The Clerk circulated a draft policy to all Cllrs in advance of the January meeting. Following the feedback given on Vs 1, the clerk updated the proposed policy and circulated Vs.2 to all Cllrs ahead of the February meeting.

Resolved

It was proposed to approve the new Vs 2 WPC policy on Memorial Safety as circulated and to establish a new Memorial Safety Working Group.

Proposed: Cllr Drury. **Seconded:** Cllr Hutchinson. **All in agreement.**

Resolved.

The new Policy was adopted, and the Memorial Safety Working Group members were confirmed as: Cllrs Wyatt, Ward, Hutchinson and Richards.

Action: The Clerk to post the new policy on the WPC website.

11. 11.1 KALC

Cllr Bartlett circulated a report from the January to all Cllrs in advance of the meeting.

It was noted that the future of ACRE is looking precarious as it has not secured the additional funding it requires to stay afloat.

12. 12.1 Highways

12.1.1 Potters Corner

WPC discussed the proposed highways safety improvement scheme for Potters Corner and agreed that as parking is needed for the newly re-opened Hare and Hounds within the 'layby' area, it would be vital to liaise with Kieran Doble's successor as a matter of urgency to stress that if funds are not assigned to undertake the full proposed scheme across both carriageways of the A20, then the minimum urgent requirement is for a left turn only scheme on exit from Sandyhurst Lane.

It was agreed to set this out in a comment for Cllrs to approve before submission to the new East Kent highways manager.

12.1.2 Proposed 20mph speed limit

It was agreed that Cllr Bainbridge will draft an urgent letter to Kieran Doble to query the recently received communication from him about why the proposed 20mph speed reduction through the centre of Westwell village cannot be implemented and so that Kieran's successor can provide a deeper explanation as soon as they are in position.

12.2.3 Flooding

The Clerk confirmed that four different areas of severe highways flooding had been reported to KCC and logged.

13. 13.1 Village Hall Management Committee

A deep clean has been organised for 7 March; the hall is looking for a new regular cleaner.

14. **14.1 Parish Priority Projects**

Cllr Bainbridge is working to increase attendance at the monthly Coffee morning at The Wheel and as part of that, is applying for member grant funding to KCC County Cllr Jeremy Eustace. Cllr Bainbridge will also meet with the proprietors of the Hare and Hounds to see if they might also host a coffee morning.

The installation of the new clamber stack on the recreation area completes the priority parish project of improving the facilities of the central leisure area.

The Clerk has submitted the areas of Tutt Hill that require attention to the KCC Highways team and is awaiting an update on when these will be actioned.

A further update will be given at the March meeting.

15. **15.1 Westwell Eye**

A catch-up meeting with the Westwell Eye editor Carolyn Thorneloe is being organised for the WPC chair and Clerk.

Action: Cllr Bainbridge.

16. **16.1 Community Resilience Plan**

A call-out was made via Westwell Eye and Westwell Events FB page for volunteers to put their names forward to help in a parish emergency such as a major power outage or water supply issue.

The Clerk said there had been a positive early response with parishioners offering 4x4s, tractors, generators, power tools, first aid expertise and general help. A register of vulnerable residents has also commenced.

Action: The Clerk to create a confidential log of all volunteers with their emergency contact details, emails and allied information.

17. **Additional Items**

17.1 WPC Asset Register

Cllrs Drury and Bainbridge to review village assets and update the photo log/ check for maintenance ahead of approval of the WPC Asset Register 2025-2026 at the March meeting.

Action: Cllr Bainbridge and Drury.

17.2 Report to KCC Highways re flooding

Action: Clerk to draft a reply letter to the resident who reported highways flooding issues about what actions WPC has taken to try and resolve them.

17.3 Signage

Action: Following questions raised by residents of Tutt Hill, Cllr Bainbridge will raise a query with ABC about whether planning permission is needed for a large, recently erected sign at Tutt Hill.

The meeting closed at 20.54 hrs. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 4 March 2026.

Chairman's Signature……