

WEST HARPTREE PARISH COUNCIL

Provisional Minutes to be approved at the next Annual Parish Meeting

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 9th May 2022 starting at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Mr R Ireland (Chairman), Mr P Hutton (Vice-Chairman), Mr C Gay, Mr G Joyce and Mr P Wood.

APOLOGIES: Mr J Mitchell and Mr D Wood.
Five members of the public attended.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 4th May 2021 were agreed as an accurate record. The minutes were proposed and seconded and unanimously agreed for adoption.

2. Chairman's Report

This is my first report since the lifting of the COVID regulations, so whilst the Council was fairly dormant and meeting remotely for 2 years, we are now back to in-person meetings and business as usual.

I would firstly like to thank Jan Burdge, who had to carry out a great number of tasks and duties via remote meetings for 2 years, and did an excellent job in what must have been trying conditions, as everyone wrestled with processes that had been necessarily enforced by Government.

After a virtual village poll, we determined there were a number of areas where villagers wished to see improvements and we have now instigated the most popular of these utilising CIL funding.

A 20 mph speed limit has been agreed with B&NES which, whilst promised in the last financial year, has been delayed due to staff shortages and we have been assured it will be re-scheduled soon. We also have matched funding totalling £20,000 to fund additional measures

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which can be undertaken to further improve safety through the village, with a view of achieving this later this calendar year. We also now have a fully trained and equipped Community Speed Watch team who will carry out random checks periodically.

The play area in the Recreation Ground has been fenced to prevent dog-fouling with additional signage imminent. We are also currently applying for additional grant funding to further upgrade play equipment.

The Village Clock motors and mechanisms have been fully refurbished, and the bus shelter roof repairs will also be funded from CIL monies, and these will hopefully commence later this year.

We are fortunate to continue to receive donations towards the cost of planting the flowerbed in the triangle, which has again looked excellent all year, with thanks to Peter Wood for maintaining this.

The Village Hall has successfully applied for a number of grants and a large amount of work has now been completed to upgrade this valuable facility on both floors. It is now being booked on a regular basis by a number of local groups running functions that are well attended by villagers. Thanks to Paul Hutton and the Hall Committee who continue to work tirelessly to make the Hall a vastly improved asset. The Hall Committee are also liaising with The Crown to put on a Jubilee Event this summer, which the Council will be supporting.

We have sadly accepted the resignation of one Councillor for personal reasons, which we will be looking to fill via co-option in the near future, and notice that our long-standing Clerk will be retiring in the Autumn.

I would like to thank David Wood for his valued support and contributions to our meetings, the Parish Councillors who continue to work hard on behalf of the Parish and give all of their time freely, and finally to Jan Burdge who continues to keep us all in order.

Richard Ireland
May 2022

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3. Ward Councillor's Report

Apologies I cannot be there with you today due to being on holiday. It's been a positive year working with the Parish Council and the residents of West Harptree who have been in touch with me about various issues.

Speeding through the village:

The number one issue raised with me when I was elected was speeding. I have been working with the parish council - and with residents through public meetings - to take action on this long-standing issue.

A 20mph speed limit is due to be on the ground in West Harptree in the next two weeks, following a public meeting last year that agreed this and me securing money from B&NES Council. This is a step forward but will not solve the issue completely, so we are preparing for the next step. I secured a further £10k in this year's B&NES budget for more steps to address speeding, and the Parish Council intend to match this. The Parish Council will be organising a public meeting this summer to discuss options, which we hope will be implemented this winter.

I am also preparing to bid for more money in next year's B&NES budget for any further works needed to make our roads safer in West Harptree.

House-building:

We face a housing crisis and the government gives B&NES a set number of houses that must be built, but B&NES has some level of control about where these are built in the district. My strong view is that these must be built either where there are excellent public transport links, where there are jobs or where the land is cheap enough that houses will be genuinely affordable. Every housing estate built on a greenfield in a beautiful village will be expensive to buy or rent. In the past almost every village was asked to 'take their fair share', which I feel is a lazy approach that does not help the real problem.

In the update to the Local Plan this year I've ensured there are no houses allocated to West Harptree. I will try to do the same when the next Local

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Plan is written in 2024.

Fixing our broken roads:

A decade of cuts has left many of our rural roads in a poor condition. I've started to reverse these cuts, investing an extra £2m in road repairs this year. This will include the main road towards the lake, hopefully extending through the village too, along with Ridge Crescent. Also, in the last year a number of small improvements were made to Harptree Hill at the request of the Parish Council.

As flooding events become more extreme it's important our drains are emptied regularly. This has not been happening in recent years, but this year I have employed a third crew with full time tanker. This increases the number of drains cleaned by 50%.

Dog fouling:

More than 10 West Harptree residents have written to me about dog fouling recently. Several have spoken informally with those responsible and the issue has improved, although not completely.

In this year's budget I secured extra enforcement money so that B&NES can start enforcing dog fouling and issuing fines when it is witnessed. This has to be intelligence led based on information from the community. I encourage anyone with information to get in touch with me.

Fly-tipping:

Two years ago, I declared a 'zero tolerance policy' to the increased fly-tipping that blights our beautiful countryside. B&NES now investigates every tip and always issues fines or prosecutes where there is any evidence at all. Our area is no longer a soft touch for fly-tippers. The number of fines issues has tripled in the last two years and fly tipping tonnages have dropped by two thirds. There is still more to do as some fly tipping still persists, but we are proactive and determined to minimise the problem.

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Recycling:

A big thank you to residents who improved our recycling rate to our best ever last year, against the backdrop of a national drop in recycling rates. I am building a new Recycling Centre in Keynsham to ensure the service is future proof. This will also include a second salt store for winter gritting to make sure we have enough to keep our roads safe as colder winters become more frequent.

Through Covid kerbside recycling services occasionally failed due to driver sickness, self-isolation or driver shortages. Driver shortages are still a problem nationally so I've recruited 17 new loaders who we are putting through driver training to keep this service going through any tough times in the future.

Litter:

Volunteers and the Parish Council do a great job of picking litter in the village, but most of the A and B roads in the district are too dangerous to be picked by volunteers. B&NES needs to do these with stop and go boards. This was always done only once per year but I bid for extra budget to increase this to twice per year, with more crews to be able to respond to litter issues in between.

Village Hall Funding:

Over the last year I've used my small ward budget as a councillor to give two grants to the village hall. One for a gazebo for events and the other to help upgrade the sound system.

Ward Councillor David Wood
30th April 2022

4. Council Accounts 2021/22

The Clerk had presented copies of a Receipts and Payments Statement, which gave details of the Council's accounts during the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 (copy placed on Minute file). The Council had a

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credit balance of £25,118.82 at the end of the period. The accounts for the year ended 31st March 2022 had been agreed and adopted on 11th April 2022.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.

Chairman

Date Signed