

XIV.G. WESTBERE PARISH COUNCIL:

The current Westbere Parish Council (WPC) meets monthly (with the exception of August and December) and is made up as follows:

Chairman: Georgina Glover; **Vice Chairman:** Jeanette Dawson;
Councillors: Maria Morcom, Mike Prince, Kathryn Wilson and Sylvia Harlow;
Clerk: Margaret Dowley.

The Councillors and Clerk are aware of the need for WPC to consider the following key steps which will become important in the future in order to become more effective.

Quality Council: The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme was launched in 2003 with the aim of providing benchmark minimum standards for parish and town councils. Since that time the scheme has been reviewed and, in June 2008, it was changed in order to reflect the increased professionalism of councils.

In order to achieve Quality Status, parish and town councils must demonstrate that they have achieved a certain standard relating to the following:

- Electoral Mandate
- Qualifications of the clerk
- Council meetings
- Communication and Community Engagement
- Annual Report
- Accounts
- Code of Conduct
- Promoting local democracy and citizenship
- Terms and conditions
- Training

Currently WPC does not have Quality Status although this may be worthy of consideration in the future.

Power of Well-Being: Power of Well-Being was introduced in 2000 in order to increase the capability of local authorities to act on behalf of their respective areas. It gives principal local authorities, including parish councils, the opportunity to do anything they consider beneficial in order to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being issues within their area unless explicitly prohibited by legislation. In 2009 four of Westbere's Parish Councillors were trained in Power of Well-Being. Unfortunately, as with Quality Status, WPC does not currently meet the full criteria required.

Equality Policy: Additionally, there is a need for WPC, in line with other parish councils, to adopt an Equality Policy within the next year or so. This is because the Equality Bill is anticipated at the end of 2011. This Bill will be an amalgamation of three existing public sector duties into one equality duty. To this end the Equality and Human Rights Commission is anticipating clear direction to parish councils regarding meeting the needs of their community. The aim of this to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good community relations.

Model Publication Scheme: On the positive side, WPC has recently adopted the Model Publication Scheme. This scheme has been prepared and approved by the Information Commissioner and commits an authority to proactively publish or otherwise make available to the public certain classes of information, such as:

- **Who we are and what we do**, including organisational information, locations and contacts.
- **What we spend and how we spend it**, including financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure.
- **What our priorities are and how we are doing**, including strategy and performance information.
- **How we make decisions**, including policy proposals and decisions.
- **Our policies and procedures**, including current written protocols for delivering our responsibilities.
- **Lists and registers**, including information held in registers required by law.
- **The services we offer**, including advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets.

This information is available on the WPC website - www.westberepc.kentparishes.gov.uk

“This project is partly funded by DEFRA’s Parish Plan Grant Scheme”