

Westfield Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Westfield Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 24th April 2017 at 7pm at the Trinity Methodist Church Hall, Wells Rd, Westfield

Present:: Cllr Geoff Fuller, Chair of Westfield Parish Council
Parish Councillors: Cllrs Diana Cooper, Bryan Wallbridge, Ron Hopkins, Phil Wilkinson, Pat Williams, Andrew Butcher, James Honess
8 Members of the public.

Attending: Lesley Welch, Parish Clerk, Emily Merko, Finance Officer and Tracey Stephens, Admin Assistant

Apologies: Cllrs Kevin Docherty, Eleanor Jackson and Lesley Mansell

1. Welcome and Overview of the Year and Introduction of all Councillors

Cllr Fuller welcomed all to the meeting, introduced the Councillors and gave an overview of the year.

Thanks were given to Cllr Cooper and Margaret Bridges for their work on the flower displays in Westfield that have given a lot of pleasure to residents and passers-by. This year the flower displays have been contracted and we are looking forward to a vibrant display once more.

At Westhill there has been some new play equipment installed – a buddy board and pick-up sticks climbing frame, putting in place some leisure equipment for older children. The tennis court at Norton Hill has had a completely new fence as has the driveway to the bowls club. The fence at the playground at Norton Hill Recreation ground has been heightened along the football pitch side to prevent accidents with footballs.

There were 16 applicants for grants this year, all of which were successful in receiving grants between £200 and £2000. The Chair's allowance also went towards some community groups.

Thanks were given to Swallow for allowing us to use their premises for meetings while the lift was out of order at the Oval Office. Thanks also to the Methodist Church for the use of the premises for this meeting.

A feasibility study has been done for a community centre in Westfield, resulting in plans being made up to replace the current Westhill Club with a purpose built facility for the community. The plans were available to view at the meeting and a questionnaire in place for people to take part if they wished. This is a major project ongoing for the people of Westfield, as our parish is the only one in BaNES that doesn't have its own community facility.

There are now two signs at the entrance to Westfield from Radstock and from Fosseway South.

A local resident, John Reynolds, has set up a running club in Westfield and helps four groups each week of different standards.

Congratulations to Westfield Allotment Society for achieving an outstanding award from Its Your Neighbourhood for the excellent condition of their allotments and all the work that has gone into them.

A remembrance plaque has been added to the memorial stone at Elm Tree Avenue, providing a place for those who wish to go if they want to reflect and remember.

There are ongoing talks with BaNES with regard to the lighting on the pit path.

2. Minutes of the last meeting held 27th April 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th April 2017 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. Youth Services in Westfield

Katy Roberts of Youth Connect gave a talk on how the Youth Service had progressed in Westfield over the year and had a display board showing evidence of some of the work that they do with the young people of Westfield.

Statistics so far:

- 77 young people have registered with the Westfield Youth Service provision
- Retention has been fantastic, we average just over 20 young people each week
- 45 males and 32 females have made contact so far
- The average age range of young people that attend is between year 9 and 11
- 5 young people have been referred to our targeted service
- 8 young people gained an accreditation in First Aid
- 15 young people are part way through a Youth Connect 'skill me up' award, which is an accredited programme that helps us to recognize and celebrate the young people's achievements.

We have 3 members of staff, myself, Alex Monk and Sam Plummer, due to the large numbers of young people taking part. We also have a young lady from Bath College helping us. All the staff have been working extremely hard to engage the group in positive activities.

Projects:

We have run a number of projects so far, all of these have come from what the young people of Westfield said they would like to do, and from us assessing their needs. Some of the activities include outreach sports sessions, arts and crafts workshops and cookery projects. We have also run a number of issue based session, from sexual health and drug and alcohol awareness to healthy friendships, risk taking behaviour, self-esteem and healthy lifestyles. We have run a 2 week certified first aid course, a cv and careers guidance course and we are currently running a certificated money management course, run in partnership with Weston College.

Partnership working:

So far we have worked alongside Project 28, the volunteer network and Weston College, Avon Fire and Rescue and our local PCSO, Bath music festival, other staff from Youth Connect, including one of our PA's and very soon a sexual health nurse. We are hoping to work alongside many more partnership agencies in the future.

Trips:

So far we have run 2 trips – 9 young people came with us to Thorpe Park for ‘Fright Night’ back in October and we took 6 young people ice skating in Bath before the Christmas holidays. The young people of Westfield have suggested more places that they would like to visit and we are currently looking at fundraising ideas with them.

We are also running our Youth Connect summer residential in July and we are hoping it will be well attended by the young people of Westfield.

Future:

We would like to run more accredited programmes like the first aid project and I aim to have 20 people complete a ‘skill me up’ award by the end of June.

We have many projects planned, from world food cookery to jewellery making and anti-bullying. We aim to do some outreach from the beginning of July as we can make the most of the summer weather and we will still run one session a week out of the Methodist Church hall.

One of the young people participating in the Youth Service stood to speak of his experience with Youth Connect in Westfield. He said that he has attended several youth groups and that this one was the best he had been to. He was particularly impressed that the staff there consult the young people about what they would like to do and adapt programmes to suit. They also teach things that the young people will use in their day to day life.

Cllr Hopkins said that he thought Youth Connect do a fantastic job in Westfield and asked how they are likely to be affected by the very large cut in funding that we have been told about. Sam Plummer advised that they have not yet been told how the cuts are going to affect them, but said that the youth service in Westfield isn’t part of the core delivery, so should not be too adversely affected at this stage. What will effect them however is the severe cut in management within the service.

4. Environment and Development in Westfield

The Chairman introduced Cllr Bryan Wallbridge, Chair of the Parish Council’s Environment and Development Committee.

Cllr Wallbridge gave a report on the activities of the E&D committee over the previous year.

He said that the Environment and Development committee predominantly deal with planning issues and projects like the flower displays in Westfield. The flower displays now have automatic watering systems in place, easing the pressure on the volunteers that helped to water the beds and planters last year.

Cllr Jackson has awarded her Ward members’ initiative money to purchase two benches for Westfield – one at Shakespeare Road and one at the top of Elm Tree Avenue, near the bus stop.

The Christmas lights switch on event was as popular as ever, if not more so. We are looking to increase the number of Christmas lights and talking about how to manage and event that is regularly increasing in popularity.

Parking is an issue that we frequently get complaints about. We take these very seriously and, while we have no direct powers, we constantly lobby BaNES to take notice of the concerns of our residents.

The defibrillator has been well received and we are looking to get three more for the parish

Last year we planted two Elm trees to commemorate the 90th birthday of her majesty, Queen Elizabeth. They are doing well.

A very successful fun fair was held again for the third time. We are very much hoping that it will come back again this year as it creates a lot of good feeling in the parish.

A slight headache was the 'hole in the wall' by the Methodist church car park, which presented danger to children rushing towards the main road. After some considerable communication with BaNES a gate was installed, making it much safer. We are developing a heritage walk, which we are hoping local residents will make use of, keeping healthy and active.

We now have five snow wardens, helping to keep the pathways clear of frost and snow in the winter.

We have a good working relationship with Youth Connect.

All this is brought about by you, the residents of Westfield. We try and bring in things that you have told us you like, or are concerned about, so we welcome any contact from you at all.

5. Finance

The Chairman introduced Cllr Phil Wilkinson, Chair of the Parish Council's Finance and Personnel committee.

Cllr Wilkinson was pleased to announce that Westfield Parish Council has not increased the precept for Westfield residents this year, even though there is a gap to fill after the decrease in funding from BaNES.

The Committee also deals with the grant presentations and much discussion is held about each project, deciding whether it is applicable to make a grant.

He was pleased, also, to advise that there is a decrease in the charge for football teams to play at Norton Hill or Westhill this year. Council is trying to encourage more teams to take part, meaning more young people taking part in a sport.

The last thing that Cllr Wilkinson talked about was the Fun Day. He made a plea for anyone that has any spare time to help out come along and take part in organising. The event is growing hugely each year and the 5-6 people that have been involved from the start are struggling to keep up.

6. A Neighbourhood Plan for Westfield and consultation on a community centre for the parish.

The Chairman introduced Cllr Ron Hopkins, Chair of the Neighbourhood Planning Working Group.

There is no doubt - Westfield is a **great** place to live.

It's a safe, prosperous, and neighbourly community with a strong historic industrial heritage, strong family and neighbourhood ties and an optimistic and enthusiastic population, looking forward to enjoying a dynamic future.

To maximise Westfield's potential, it will be necessary to Invest in our community not only in financial terms but also with personal effort and community spirit.

Any changes we introduce in the years ahead will only be worthwhile if they can make a real difference to the lives of local people and the future of its community.

The central government **Localism Act 2011** presented exactly the opportunity for communities such as ours to become more directly involved in the planning the future of their society and the way in which they wanted their local administration to interpret their community hopes and aspirations.

Westfield Parish Council realised that following the exciting proposals and guidelines laid out in the Localism Act, would present a unique opportunity to ensure the people of Westfield would be able to research and form conclusions that would present clear and unequivocal instructions to BANES in all aspects of the future of our parish, and so early 2014, Westfield became one of just 20 parish councils to set about the process of creating a neighbourhood plan.

That number has now grown and currently over 100 groups are working on their plans or have applied to their plans to local referendum.

Our plan will allow Westfield residents to decide where, for example, new housing should go, what educational infrastructure should be incorporated, and where commercial and retail locations were required, rather than leaving this decision entirely to Bath & North East Somerset Council (BANES).

Westfield's Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision for the area that reflects the thoughts and feelings of local people with a real interest in their community.

The Plan lays down a clear framework with objectives on key themes such as moving around, housing, employment, green space, shops and community facilities. It builds on current and planned activity and says what Westfield Parish Council, BANES and its partners will work towards, whilst remembering and cherishing the history and heritage of their parish.

When our plan is completed and approved it will go forward to referendum where everyone in the parish can review the plan and vote for its acceptance or not as the case may be.

Once the plan has been accepted by referendum it will be necessary for BANES to comply with its contents in all future decisions affecting our parish.....

Westfield Parish Council believes that the Neighbourhood Planning process will make Westfield an even better place to live, work and enjoy.

I simply cannot complete this introduction without thanking some of the key people who have worked so hard to bring it to fruition, or who have supported the Steering Group so strongly during this huge task, my thanks go to:

The Westfield Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group comprising Cllr Geoff Fuller, Cllr Andrew Butcher, Cindy Carter, Clive Maggs, Ian Fraser, Cllr James Honess, Joan Pack, Julie O'Rourke (BANES), Cllr Lesley Mansell, Mike Woodhouse, and Ron Bevan and the late Richard Wallace.

And, the hard work and attention to detail provided by the team at Westfield Parish Offices, Lesley Welch (Parish Clerk), Emily Merko and Tracey Stephens.

It is with regret that I have to say that Richard Wallace, who was such a large part of this process with his invaluable work on green spaces, passed away recently. We would very much like to dedicate the Neighbourhood Plan to Richard in commemoration of his work.

7. The Big Local

We are Sarah and Rob, part time community workers for the Radstock and Westfield Big Local.

In 2010 the Big Lottery Fund announced that over a period of 10 years Radstock and Westfield, jointly, will be given in excess of £1m to make a difference to the lives of the people living here.

Throughout this period we will ensure we address Big Local's four outcomes, which are that:

- Communities will be in a better position to identify local needs and take action in response to them
- People will have increasing skills and confidence so that they can continue to identify and respond to local needs in the future
- The community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises
- People will feel that their area is an even better place to live

Our vision is for a community that is creating its own future and working together to make things happen.

We are volunteer-led with professional support. From the earliest days this project has been about the people who live and work in our area. Over 40 volunteers form the partnership that directly influences what happens to this money. The partnership elect the management committee that makes it all happen.

We ensured consultations were carried out with local residents, to identify community needs. Out of this came our first three year plan. The plan was endorsed by Local Trust in February 2015. We recruited two professionals working part-time to support and deliver the Big Local on a daily basis.

In 2014 Westfield Parish Council applied to become our locally trusted organisation, taking responsibility to manage our finances. We rent an office space next door to them which helps our communications.

All the projects we have contributed to serve residents in Westfield as well as Radstock, Writhlington, Haydon, Tynning and Clandown and have reached over 1,000 people so far.

If you go to our website www.radstockwestfield.org.uk you can see reports on around 40 of the projects.

On our website you can also find advice on applying for funding and places to look for it. We also have a page that provides plenty of information on local statistics which as well as being very interesting can help organisations target their resources and strengthen their funding applications.

We're not just a pot of money, we aim to help bring more funding and resources into the area beyond the £1m that we have by assisting organisations to develop the tools to successfully apply for funding, and once we become a CIC we will also be able to make applications from other funders.

8. Bath and North East Somerset Councillor's report

Cllr Jackson was unable to attend this evening, but sent a report to the meeting:

The challenges this year have mainly centred around road safety and planning. I have also been much involved in the work to create a Neighbourhood Plan for funding for Westfield for projects such as allotments that enhance the sense of community.

Firstly I would like to pay tribute to the outstanding work of the Clerk and her staff. They nobly field all manner of questions from the public and frequently have the problem solved before I get an email about it. It also helps to have so many alert parish councillors trouble spotting and trouble shooting, who know the patch so well compared to me. I especially like the way they cheerfully roll up their sleeves for bulb planting, fun days etc.

This year I have channelled ward members' initiative funding to organisations which strengthen the community – assistance with renovations in the church halls at St Peter's Church and Trinity Methodist Church and for play equipment and plants at Westfield Primary School and Nursery.

Through the Parish Council I have also obtained new benches for Elm Tree Avenue and Shakespeare Road play area, and hope to get a litter bin for the bench by the chapel. The criteria BaNES applies are very strict and I was sorry to disappoint the Ladies' Choir and the 1st Radstock Scout Group.

One challenge this year has been to get the message over to the planning policy team that 'Westfield is full' and will object to developments in Mendip which will over stretch the A367 and community resources.

Together with Westfield Parish Council I have worked to get improvements to the A367, especially the safety of the pedestrian crossings, parking and signage. Cllr Fuller and I have frequently been out to Longfellow Road and other areas affected by inconsiderate policy.

I also got the 82/82A Saturday bus service restored when it was cut. It is heavily used.

Work has continued to get more allotments and to get play equipment replaced by BaNES.

Every resident in Radstock and Westfield always says when asked that we should prioritise young people. I have been working closely with the senior Youth Officer to get a programme in Westfield and to fund a survey of their needs and wishes. Getting a new Youth Hub (St Hugh's?) will be next year's challenge.

I also spent time on the Radstock and Westfield Development Advisory Group which meets when officers feel like it and is not very productive. I would like to think that I had done something to improve communications between BaNES and Westfield Parish Council. Also, where Westfield took a different view to the planning department case officer on a planning application I generally got the decision referred upwards to the planning committee.

My real coup, though, was to get the new CEO of BaNES, Ashley Ayre, stuck in traffic for 20 minutes by St Peter's Road! That got the message across better than a thousand emails, but we are still struggling to get the air quality monitored.

This brings us to the most fundamental question of all: Where or What is Westfield? How do we get services extended out here? It seems that the road sweepers stop at Maple Drive.

Not only the Neighbourhood Plan, but the exhibition on the History of Westfield at Radstock museum – 12th September to 28th November will help. We (the working group) need more volunteers and material as soon as possible.

Finally, this is interconnected with BaNES, I have got the heart of Westfield entered into a new class of South West in Bloom award. That should put us on the map nationally! Success depends on everyone helping in the Elm Tree Avenue area.

As an appendix I also note that I have spent a lot of time on housing matters (Curo) and the health and wellbeing committees. We sanitise health provision and this summer will re-examine social care – home care to keep the frail and elderly in their own homes as long as possible.

I went to the National Local Government Association Labour group sessions on housing in February and continue to do work in planning and housing problems.

Again, apologies for my absence. Please feel free to email me at: Eleanor_jackson@bathnes.gov.uk, or call 01761 438968

Cllr Robin Moss addressed the meeting. He thanked Westfield Parish Council for inviting him to speak and thanked them for all the work done by the Councillors and staff. Westfield Parish Council has a lot to be proud of – the Christmas Lights switch on event, the Fun Day and the flowers are worthy of note as is the work that is essential in providing services in the parish – the grants presentations and support for youth services. Youth Social Services is a big challenge for BaNES, especially when the Government grant will decrease, going to £0 in 2019. This is where the help from the Parish Council is much needed. Another challenge is how do you face up to the demands of building more housing without any further services being available? A particular challenge for Westfield is that we are on the border with Mendip and the effect of building in Mendip is felt on the infrastructure in Westfield, with it having the main access road to Bath from that direction. We have regular joint meetings with Mendip District Council to make sure they are aware of the impact on Westfield. We also have to fight for our share of the money that comes from these housing developments, instead of letting it all go to Bath. There is the danger of Westfield becoming a commuter community and we are working hard, together with the Parish Council, to avoid that.

9. Questions from the Public

9.1 At last year's meeting the state of the roads was an issue raised and they have not improved. Is this being looked at?

Cllr Moss spoke and confirmed that there is a queue of roads that need repairing and upgrading and that the main A367 wasn't built for the volume of traffic that it is now supporting. There is a chance that the new office of Metro Mayor could make a difference, with one of their responsibilities being infrastructure. There is more sequencing now with communication between the service providers and BaNES.

Why can't we create more local jobs, obviating the necessity for the high usage of the main road through Westfield? We were promised some years ago assistance with broadband, which hasn't materialised and this is something that is looked at by the BaNES councillors for the ward.

9.2 Parking is a major issue in Westfield. There are always cars parked along the main road causing hold ups. What can be done about that?

Cllr Fuller advised that parking is an issue that is frequently addressed by the Council and communicated to BaNES. The parking on the main road is only on one side and is not seen as a problem, as it has a traffic calming effect, and two lanes of vehicles can get past.

9.3 With the recent consultation on 20mph speed limits in Westfield, how can they make a 20mph on an A road?

Cllr Hopkins responded to say that there is no plan to put 20mph on the A367, and that Westfield Parish Council has responded to the consultation. The Council is also in discussion with BaNES with regard to pollution along the main road.

10. Summing up and closure of the meeting

Cllr Fuller closed the meeting, thanking those that had spoken. He asked attendees to have a look at the proposals for the new community centre and complete a questionnaire about the proposals

The meeting closed at 8:10pm.