

Westfield Annual Parish Meeting
Minutes of the Westfield Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 26th April
2016 at 7pm at the Trinity Methodist Church Hall, Wells Rd, Westfield

Present:: Cllr Robin Moss, Chair of Westfield Parish Council
Parish Councillors: Cllrs Diana Cooper, Bryan Wallbridge, Ron Hopkins, Geoff Fuller, Phil Wilkinson, Eleanor Jackson, Kevin Docherty, Angie Seaman-Moss, Andrew Butcher,
PCSO Mandy Ware,
8 Members of the public.

Attending: Tracey Stephens, Admin Assistant

Apologies: Cllr Pat Williams, Lesley Welch, Parish Clerk

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

Cllr Moss welcomed all to the meeting and gave an overview of the year:

First of all, many thanks to all who have helped and added to what the Parish has been doing this year - the volunteers on a cold & breezy Saturday morning planting bulbs (the Westfield Allotment Group in particular), the Neighbourhood planning group who are still working; maybe not the most glamorous piece of work, but when housing and developments seem to continue apace absolutely necessary when trying to improve services alongside building houses. The Fun Day and the Christmas lights switch-on, as well as the craft day, were popular successes, due in no small part to the many helping hands. A particular thanks here to Phil Wilkinson & Diana Cooper, who as well as organising managed to arrange good weather as well! Westfield is fortunate to have so many residents willing to volunteer their time and I know that a paragraph in a report can't mention everyone, nor do justice to the amount of work.

But as well as much to be proud of, Westfield also has its share of challenges. In particular the problem of traffic and parking is a perennial issue, with ongoing conversations with schools and businesses about the need to be mindful of the need to be good neighbours to local residents. These concerns increase when we (along with many other communities nationally) see plans from developers to build more and more houses without thinking about the services and infrastructure that needs to go in place alongside. Parish councillors will continue to work with and talk to B&NES as well as Mendip Council about plans that are being considered and will also make sure that developers contribute towards improving local services, especially where they have made commitments but then seem reluctant to fulfil their end of the deal.

Any annual report would not be complete without many thanks to the Parish 'office team' of Lesley, Emily & Tracey. They do a wonderfully efficient job without any fuss or bother, and the fact that Westfield Parish Council has been awarded 'Quality' status and their advice and support is often sought from other local councils is a tribute to their work.

Finally, many thanks to my fellow councillors for their support and advice this year. It is a privilege to be Parish Chair and I have enjoyed this year in the hot seat!

Robin Moss

2. Minutes of the last meeting held 27th March 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2015 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. 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. Going back to April 2015 we started work on Westhill Recreation Ground, with the BMX track being resurfaced and new play equipment being purchased after receiving a grant from Awards for All. The new equipment is currently being installed. The youth shelter has been moved to Norton Hill. This will hopefully have the effect of keeping the older youths out of the play area for younger children and a sign has been erected saying that the area is for under 12's only. The Fun Day expands every year – Cllr Wallbridge made an appeal for volunteers to help out with the event.

The Christmas lights switch on was very successful, with new Christmas lights on the lampposts along Wells Road making the area even brighter. The craft fair is growing and the weekly boules evening is a great success.

At Norton Hill we have installed security cameras and lighting to cut down on anti social behaviour.

We lost our contractor dealing with the flowers in public places so the flower displays weren't as good. This year the hanging baskets are being dealt with by Flowers by Nicola. Again there was an appeal for help to water the tubs and coal troughs in the summer months.

We have a new gateway sign into Westfield, with another one on order. This is to highlight Westfield as a community and help raise our profile.

There is to be a plaque on the stone at the time capsule in memorial of fallen service personnel, meaning people won't have to go into Midsomer Norton or Radstock to pay their respects.

We have done a lot of fencing work at Norton Hill.

Currently we are working with youth workers engaging young people.

We are still trying to get funds for a community centre – this is a long term goal.

The E&D committee work on planning applications in the parish, putting our point forward to BaNES, Mendip and building contractors.

Cllr Butcher arrived at 7:25pm

4. Finance

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

Cllr Wilkinson highlighted the work of the Finance and Personnel committee. He gave thanks to the office staff for their support and to members of the F&P committee for their continued involvement.

He reported that, over the last year, the Parish Council has taken a few hits financially. We have had to pay to repair items damaged by vandalism and remove fly tipping, which seems to be on the increase.

We have given money to community organisations in the form of grants over two applications.

There were apologies for the increase in the precept this year and said that the Council would rather not have had to do so. We face a loss of £19,000 from other sources over the next few years and the £2 a year increase is to try to offset that. It was pointed out that this is the first increase for 4 years.

The Parish Council finances are healthy and we are holding reserves, as required by central Government.

5. A Neighbourhood Plan for Westfield

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

Cllr Hopkins explained the purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan. It was an initiative started by central Government to give local authorities, towns and parishes a say in what happens in their community. On average a Neighbourhood Plan takes 3.5 years to come to fruition. We have been going for around a year, so have a little way to go!

He advised on a consultation for residents of Westfield that is taking place on Tuesday 17th May in Westhill Club at 7pm and encouraged people to attend. He also invited people to attend meetings held at the Oval Office. The next meeting is on Tuesday 24th May at 7pm.

6. The Big Local

Cllr Moss reported on the Big Local. It is in the 3rd year of a 10 year programme to help groups to fund community activities. Projects were awarded funds at the Dragons' Den event last year – for example, playschemes, groups for people with learning disabilities, agricultural land and building training at Bath College, Somer Valley campus, learning rock guitar, making jewelry.

One of the aims of the Big Local is to encourage groups to learn how to apply for funds from external providers. This area was seen as being low in groups applying for lottery money or grants. This would help to draw money into the area.

There is to be a public consultation event to take place shortly. This will be advertised.

7. Bath and North East Somerset Councillor's report

Cllr Moss introduced Cllr Eleanor Jackson as ward Councillor for Westfield. Cllr Jackson said it was a privilege to be elected as a Councillor for Westfield. She said that as a Councillor she had to be thankful for small victories when campaigning for something on parishioners' behalf. She was involved in stopping the mortuary being closed at the RUH, in having a dedicated officer in BaNES to support military families and in keeping bus routes open – the 82 being a case in point. She felt that it is important to extend the services that are available in Westfield. We are now working with a youth worker in Westfield, engaging young people, which is an extension of a youth programme in Radstock. She understood that parking and traffic is an ongoing problem and felt that the hole in the wall by the new toucan crossing on Wells Road is dangerous and is therefore campaigning for BaNES to block that up. Since 2008 she has been on the Health and Wellbeing committee, which is currently focussing on mental health and domestic violence. She asked people to report any issues they have experienced regarding the abuse of old people in care homes. She is also working with Mardon's club looking to get work done by Linden Homes. Radstock museum will be working with the people of Westfield to curate an exhibition on the history of Westfield. She finished by saying that Westfield is a community committed to enterprise and education.

8. Questions from the Public

8.1 Do Councillors think that Westfield Parish has a voice in BaNES that's being heard, now that we are three councils instead of one which was Norton Radstock?

Cllr Moss responded by saying that we have the same voice that Norton Radstock had. Ward Councillors work hard to ensure that our views are taken into account.

8.2 Are there many debtors? ie. People who haven't paid their rates?

Cllr Wilkinson responded, advising that we don't have access to that information. Cllr Moss reported that BaNES has a 98% collection rate.

8.3 Is the new Toucan crossing finished? The drain has no tarmac around it.

Cllr Fuller advised that the road is scheduled to be resurfaced.

8.4 When is the Wells Road going to be resurfaced?

Cllr Moss responded. It will be resurfaced this financial year. One member of the public pointed out that it is the main Bath to Exeter road and is in a terrible state of disrepair. This is a Group 3 trunk road and the responsibility for keeping it in good order is with the Government. BaNES has to monitor it and report to the

Government. It was suggested by a member of the public that every resident in Westfield should be asked to write to our MP complaining about the state of the road and asking for it to be repaired.

8.5 Parking at Waterside Road was brought up as an issue.

One member of the public reported that vans park on each side of the road in the evenings and that the 20mph limit is frequently ignored. Could there be double yellow lines? PCSO Mandy Ware advised that the police have no jurisdiction over yellow lines. Cllr Moss said that if a vehicle is taxed and has an MOT it can park anywhere and that all we can do is request that drivers are mindful of their neighbours. There is no legal process that we can follow. Double yellow lines can cause problems for residents as well as can residents' parking permits. Cllr Jackson suggested that perhaps there could be barriers preventing parking on the pavements. PCSO Ware asked why we can't have a dedicated Traffic warden in Westfield on a daily basis.

8.6 Is there anything that can be done about the parking at Keats Road and Chaucer Road and on the Janes estate in general?

Three members of the public claimed that parking at the turning points at the top of their roads meant that any vehicle going up their cul-de-sacs cannot turn around. People are parking there to visit Mardons now as well as those from school. Cllr Moss said that we will ask Mardons to ask their members to park thoughtfully. One member of the public said that when Westfield Primary was open, but Fosseyway wasn't, the parking on Longfellow Road wasn't an issue. People are using the road from Wesley Avenue to Longfellow Road as a rat run to the schools when they should be using the main road. It was pointed out that we are frequently in communication with the schools with regard to parking. It was claimed that the double yellow lines that are in place on Longfellow Road are becoming very faint and need repainting.

ACTION: to put parking as an issue on the next Council meeting agenda and to consider residents permit parking.

9. Summing up and closure of the meeting

Cllr Moss closed the meeting thanking people for coming along and advising that they could attend any meeting of the Council.

The meeting closed at 8:25pm.