

Westfield Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Westfield Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 27th March 2014 at 7pm at the Westfield Methodist Church Hall, Wells Rd, Westfield

Present:: Cllr Geoff Fuller, Chair of Westfield Parish Council

Cllr Rob Appleyard, Westfield Parish Councillor and Westfield Councillor for Bath and North East Somerset (BANES)

Cllr Robin Moss, Westfield Parish Councillor and Westfield Councillor for Bath and North East Somerset Council.

Parish Councillors: Cllrs Andrew Butcher, Anne Clarke, Diana Cooper, Sue Hamilton, Brian Wallbridge, Phil Wilkinson .

3 Members of the public.

Attending: Lesley Welch, Parish Clerk

Apologies: Cllrs Eddie Newman and Sheena Russell and Rev Rachma Bush.

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

Cllr Fuller welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Parish Council's third year saw progress in many important areas. A lot of work has been done by all Councillors.

In terms of recreation, grant funding from the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund meant that Norton Hill Play Area could be rejuvenated with the removal of some pieces of play equipment which were literally rotting away and their replacement with some modern, play equipment picked by the pupils of Westfield Primary School and Fosse Way School.

The old tennis court is being transformed with a petanque court, a basket ball hoop and an all weather table tennis table with the ground being re-surfaced. Thanks to the Police Commissioner's Community Fund for a grant to help get this started and to Cllr Cooper for her work in this respect.

Moving on to communications, the Parish Council's quarterly publication the 'Westfield Warbler' doubled in size to allow the inclusion of more articles from the local community.

Westfield has a number of regular events. The Westfield Fun Day returned to Westhill Recreation Ground in June and a group of volunteers was set up to work towards expanding the range of entertainment next year. If you would like to be part of this event please contact Cllr Wilkinson.

2013 saw the Christmas Lights display extended to include more trees around the local shops and the electrics co-ordinated. Thanks to the Methodist Church for opening its doors and providing refreshments. We would like to see a Christmas Fair as part of the Christmas Lights Switch on. If you would like to be involved please contact Cllr Fuller.

The Allotments are a lovely site and the Parish Council contributed to the fencing to provide security for ploholders. Please contact Cllr Appleyard or WAGS if you would like more information about plots.

The Parish Council continued to support the Winter Maintenance Programme in Westfield with the purchase of a third gritting machine to be operated by the growing team of highly valued voluntary Snow Wardens. More Snow Wardens have come forward in the Waterford Park area, many thanks to all who have volunteered.

Work with Bath and North East Somerset Council for a smiley face speed indicator device outside Westfield Primary School came to fruition, later vandalism put it out of commission. The smiley face sign at Westfield School has now come back and is up and running. This device is not a speed camera, it just informs drivers of their speed. It is outside the school and it is aimed at keeping children safe.

In June, Waterside Carnival Club presented a defibrillator to the local community in memory of Larry Dando. This is a great asset to the community and huge thanks go to the Waterside Carnival Club for all their work in fundraising, purchasing and commissioning the defibrillator and everyone who helped install it. Since its installation, Parish Councillors have taken turns in checking the defibrillator every week to help ensure it is always ready for use.

Tenders went out for the flowers in and around Westfield to make it a vibrant area. The Parish Council apologises for the display last year. We are pleased to say that the contract has been awarded and we are hopeful that it will be a good display this year. We are purchasing two hanging basket trees – one for the entrance of Nightingale Way and one with a planter around it for the green area outside Ruskin Road.

December saw the Parish Council grant fund a number of local groups including SWALLOW, WISH, Scouts etc.

2. Minutes of the last meeting held 25th April 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2013 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. Environment and Development in Westfield

The Chairman introduced Cllr Andrew Butcher, Chair of the Parish Council's Environment and Development Committee. Cllr Butcher outlined the role of the Committee and in particular recent work on the Placemaking Plan which is to be submitted to BANES outlining our planned community development in the next 20 years or so. This should link with the Community Plan which is being produced by the Westfield Questers which is looking a community aspirations.

4. Finance

Cllr Phil Wilkinson thanked the Parish Clerk and staff in the office for their support during the year and he outlined the Parish Council's financial position. The precept is remaining at its current rate for another year and the Parish Council is looking to maintain it at its current level. New properties are being built in the Parish and this means the Parish Council has access to a bigger precept.

5. The Big Local

Cllr Robin Moss, Chair of the Big Local Steering Group gave an update on the work of this group.

The recent Dragons Den event at Prattens was a very successful evening. There were 21 applicants, 19 gave presentations on the evening and, following a ballot, 12 groups were awarded the full £500 or slightly less. This was well reported in the press and there are plans to run this on a regular basis. The National Lottery has taken note and has invited the Chair to talk on Residents' Involvement in Decision Making in Bristol.

In March 2014 the Parish Council agreed to become a Local Trusted Organisation, holding funds for the Big Local and administering them to the local community under the direction of the Big Local Steering Group. Cllr Moss thanked the Parish Council for taking on this role which reflects the community responsibility of the Parish Council.

For the future, the Steering Group will morph into a Partnership to take an increased responsibility for the £1million funding for Westfield and Radstock.

6. Bath and North East Somerset Councillors' report

Cllr Robin Moss reported on the successful campaign to save the Childrens Centres this year.

Traffic and parking were of particular concern for residents in Longfellow Road, Larch Court and Nightingale Way. They are looking at what measures can be put in place and lobbying for a parking and traffic survey for Westfield.

It was a disappointment that the Sainsburys application was rejected in Westfield and it remains to be seen what happens in Midsomer Norton. Concerns over what would appear to be a conflict of interest in BANES refusing the application in Westfield, in favour of selling its own land in Midsomer Norton, had been raised.

Within the Economic Forum BANES Councillors and businesses were launching a Business Loan Scheme of £135,000 to help develop local businesses. National research had shown a considerable number of small traders in Westfield and Radstock.

Following Wards Councillors requests, the Fosse Way School planning application was to be heard by Committee.

Cllr Rob Appleyard raised the Radstock redevelopment and the concerns about the road infrastructure and its impact on traffic flow going through Westfield from Shepton Mallett. It was understood that the housing development might be delayed for a few years.

He reported success in securing some additional funding for a Citizens Advice Bureau, to be based in Midsomer Norton, to help Westfield residents.

7. Westfield Questers

The Chairman welcomed Mr Ron Bevin who outlined the work of the Westfield Questers to develop a Community Plan to look at aspirations. The small group has been meeting regularly and developed two sets of survey questions – one in depth and the other abridged.

A community event last June facilitated by the South West Foundation produced a very good report, which is available on the Parish Council's website.

Costs for the next stage of the Community Plan will be put to the Parish Council shortly. This is an important document for Westfield, personally he was very much behind it and Mr Bevin thanked all in the group for their hard work.

8. Questions from the Public

8.1 Who is responsible for the public seats? In particular the one by the bus stop is in very bad condition – Cllr Appleyard said that probably this was BANES's responsibility and he would take this matter to the relevant department.

8.2 Parking at Waterside Road, particularly on the junction, created an accident waiting to happen. Double yellow lines are needed. This has got worse over the last few months and might be to do with the former Elm Tree pub development – Cllr Appleyard would look into this. If it was local people parking there then to move them causes displacement. He and Cllr Moss would talk to the PCSO's over the next few days to remind contractors to park considerately.

8.3 The Dragons Den event is to be applauded. How many residents were involved? - Cllr Moss said that over 80 people were involved and was congratulated on the event.

8.4 Were there any forthcoming changes in planning procedures? – Cllr Butcher reported that at the moment plans are not considered in the light of the combination of other developments in the area. There is a movement to get that modified so that they can be looked at in the context of other plans.

8.5 It is understood that BANES has waived s.106 payments of £2.6million in return for affordable housing in Radstock. If the housing element is delayed for a further two years, each delay fritters away more money. Are there to be any community benefits for Westfield who, like Radstock, will be affected by the new housing development – Cllr Appleyard reported affordable housing does get built at a slight hit to developers and that the Core Strategy will address the amount of affordable housing and deliberations on this will start again next week.

8.6 Why are the changes to the road layout being done in Radstock now, when the housing development is delayed? – Cllr Appleyard said that it is accepted that changes are needed to the road structure and a fund of money in the region of £1million has come in for the road changes which will be lost if this is not done now.

8.7 Over 50 residents turned out in respect of the recent meeting on the proposed development of land north of Fossey Gardens by the

greenway – it is good to see local people starting to fight for their environment.

8.8 It is noted that the Dragons Den is going to be repeated. Is the £1million going to be spent in small chunks? - Cllr Moss said that a number of the Dragons Den projects might grow larger, so it is about making it accessible to local people. But certainly it is not intended that all the funds will be given in small amounts.

8.9 Ward Councillors initiative – is there an update on how Ward Councillors are allocating their funding? – Cllr Appleyard reported that bids have been put in but that it would not be right to report this until they have been confirmed with BANES in case they are not successful. Everyone will be informed via the press when they know.

9. Summing up and closure of the meeting

Cllr Fuller thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.