

WESTFIELD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT THE TRINITY METHODIST HALL ON TUESDAY 12TH MARCH 2019 STARTING AT 7PM

- Present:** Cllr Geoff Fuller, Chair of Westfield Parish Council
Parish Councillors: Cllrs Diana Cooper, Ron Hopkins, Eleanor Jackson, Lesley Mansell, Bryan Wallbridge, Pat Williams and Phil Wilkinson,
12 Members of the public.
Cllr Robin Moss, BANES Councillor for Westfield
- Attending:** Lesley Close, Parish Clerk, Emily Merko, Finance Officer and Tracey Stephens, Admin Assistant
- Apologies:** Cllrs Andrew Butcher, Kevin Docherty, and James Honess. PC Mark Graham

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF COUNCILLORS

Cllr Fuller welcomed all to the meeting and introduced the Councillors and officers.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 23RD APRIL 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April 2018 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. WESTFIELD INSPIRATIONAL CITIZEN AWARD

Cllr Fuller presented the Westfield Inspirational Citizen Award to Martin Bates. This is his nomination:

“Martin has been the Chairman of Westfield Allotment and Garden Society for over 5 years. Currently there are 65 members ranging from 4yrs old to 90 yrs old.

He has launched the gardening for children and promoted this throughout Westfield, leading to the successful Children’s gardening club which is open to all children.

Martin makes sure the allotments are accessible to all residents of Westfield through supporting Westfield Fun Day, Britain in Bloom and WAGS own open day in the summer.

He works tirelessly to make sure WAGS is a success and is always on hand to offer support and advice.

He really is an Inspirational Citizen. “

Martin, in response, said he was very surprised to have been told he'd won the award, not even being aware that he'd been nominated. He said it was all about the Westfield allotmenters as a team – all of whom do a fantastic job. He loves being at the allotments and seeing the children getting involved and learning gardening. He offered thanks to the Parish Council for its help and support.

4. BROADBAND IN WESTFIELD

The Chair introduced Neil Rogers, Community Engagement Manager of Truespeed who gave a presentation regarding their broadband offer that is coming to the area shortly. The company has invested considerably in the infrastructure and would need to see 30% of residents take up the offer.

Question – what would happen if they don't get 30%?

Answer – the work is being split between Westfield, Midsomer Norton and Radstock, so it would be divided into smaller projects

Question – Is the infrastructure underground or overhead?

Answer – Overhead for older properties and underground for newer estates

Question – how long would people have to sign up for?

Answer – 18 month contracts

5. THE WORK OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

a Overview by Cllr Fuller, Chair of the Parish Council

Cllr Fuller gave an overview of the work of the Parish Council over the last year.

Neighbourhood Plan - The Neighbourhood Plan is now part of planning policy in this area, informing the standard and type of new housing and business development, the use of green space and amenities. Thanks to all those that took part in creating the Plan over the last 3 years and special thanks to Cllr Hopkins for chairing the working group and to the Clerk for all her work.

Youth Services - Due to budget cuts at BANES, 2018 saw the cost of youth services in Westfield being met by the Parish Council and it is good to see the Tuesday evening youth work at the Westfield Methodist Hall go from strength

to strength. Sam from Youth Connect will describe in more detail the things that the young people now have access to in Westfield.

Christmas lights - we have added Christmas lights to lampposts further along the main road through Westfield. Driving all the way through the middle of Westfield now is very festive! The Christmas lights switch on evening was a success again – more detail from Bryan in his report.

Inspirational Citizen - we have, of course, awarded our second Inspirational Citizen Award tonight. This was initiated last year and the first recipient was John Reynolds of Westfield TT running group. He and Martin have both been worthy winners and we look forward to someone different being recognised each year.

Keeping the community tidy - A small area of unsightly land at Birch Road was made ready for planting by the Parish Council and planted up voluntarily by a local resident.

Litter picking events were co-ordinated through the year by a local councillor and go a long way to keeping Westfield tidy.

Remembrance - The 100th anniversary of the end of World War 1 saw the first remembrance event at the memorial stone at the top of Elm Tree Avenue. The service took place in this church, then wreaths were laid by various Westfield organisations at the memorial stone.

Westfield Massachusetts - In December the Parish Council forged links with Westfield Massachusetts with a radio link up to help them celebrate the start of their 350th birthday. Chair of the Council Geoff Fuller said, "It was fascinating to be in the recording studio and to be able to see the two men we were talking to on a video link. There is a huge difference between the two Westfields in terms of size. Otherwise it is eerie how many similarities there are in our histories. Both communities began as agricultural areas and both have a history in manufacturing. There are numerous place names around Westfield MA that also exist in the vicinity of Westfield here – for example, Southwick, Southampton, Blandford and Bristol. It was a real pleasure to chat to Bryan Sullivan and Harry Rock and a huge thank you to BBC Somerset for enabling it to happen."

Defibrillators - 2018 saw two new defibrillators installed in the parish, bringing the total up to four. The new ones are located at the Fire Station, kindly maintained by the Fire Authority and the second is outside the Doctor's Surgery and is maintained by Westfield Allotments and Garden Society. Many thanks to both WAGS and the Fire Authority for voluntarily undertaking this important work.

What's coming up in 2019/20? - A Westfield Green and Open Spaces Working Group has been set up to prioritise and drive projects to enhance our open green spaces. The renovation of the old Roman Road footpath was one item raised by local people in the Neighbourhood Plan. Others include the renovation of Snails Brook and the linking of land at Shakespeare Road Play Area with the new town park in Midsomer Norton via a nature trail with picnic facilities.

Ownerless land which is suffering from lack of grass cutting by BANES is an issue which the Parish Council has been working hard to find a solution to. We're pleased to say that a solution has now been found and the grass in these areas will be cut regularly.

A stand-alone pavilion at Westhill Recreation Ground is being investigated and funding sources are being explored.

We are working with BANES towards the renovation of Shakespeare Road play area, funded entirely by developer contributions.

Postal addresses – you should have received a letter from Royal Mail saying that your postal address should be Westfield, Radstock, not Midsomer Norton, Radstock or just Radstock. This has gone out as a consultation offering the opportunity to object to enforcing the postal address change. We would hope that people who live in Westfield would be proud to live in Westfield and be happy to have that on their address!

Fun Day – Fun Day at Westhill this year will be on Sunday 2nd June. Thanks to all those involved in organizing it.

Elections – last but not least! - On 2nd May this year there will be elections for your parish council. If you are at all interested in becoming a Councillor for the parish of Westfield, then speak to any of the current Councillors here later, or call me or the office to discuss. You will have picked up from these notes, and those that follow from Bryan and Phil, that the community is the focus of being a parish councillor. People from all walks of life are welcomed.

b. Environment and Development committee

The Chairman introduced Cllr Bryan Wallbridge, Chair of the Environment and Development committee

Cllr Wallbridge reported:

BANES Local Plan – over the year we responded to consultations from BANES Planning Department.

RADCO - We had a presentation from RADCO for the new homes and retail premises. The plans are currently under review by BaNES and we have reported our considerations.

Proposed Larch Court allotments - Last year I reported that a survey had found most local residents were in favour of a new allotment site at Larch Court. The transfer of the land is almost complete and WAGS will then take on the day to day creation and management of the site.

Flowers in Public places – planting and maintenance of trucks and flower beds at Jubilee Green has been undertaken by an outside contractor this year. For next year we are planning to remove the hanging baskets from the fabric of the shops and have them free standing on two arm hanging basket trees.

Front Garden Competition - this year's deserved winners were from Glebelands while the container competition was won by a resident of Kestrel Place (opposite Norton Hill School, in case you weren't sure!)

Fun Fair – The Fun Fair at Norton Hill Recreation Ground is fast becoming an annual event. 2018 saw a successful visit again from them and they are lined up to come to the Rec again from 15th to 19th May.

Heritage Walks - the walks through Westfield continued as a feature of the Somer Valley Walking Festival and thanks to Geoff for leading the walk. Bath Ramblers have been volunteering within BaNES to do work on public footpaths, and they have been working on the Waterside Valley to remove brambles etc. Thanks to Sheila Petherbridge of BaNES for coordinating this.

Christmas Lights switch on is getting bigger and bigger. We had the Westfield Primary School choir join in with Westfield Voices choir and the Midsomer Norton and Radstock Silver Band to sing carols, children from Westfield Primary School and the Fosseyway School switched on the lights and Father Christmas was very busy once again. The words from Revd Ian Roussell were well received and the complimentary mulled wine is always welcome! It's a pity that the rain came down during the final hymn, but it could have been a lot worse!

Snow wardens –Thanks to those volunteers that helped. We only have three snow wardens now, so any extra volunteers for next winter would be very welcome.

Shakespeare Road Play Area – We have been liaising with BANES for the renovation of the play area using s.106 funds.

Norton Hill Recreation Ground – three break ins in quick succession at Norwest Bowling Club prompted a review and update of security arrangements at the site by the Club.

Westhill Recreation Ground – the ‘fort’ in the play area suffered from rotting wood and was removed. We have gone out to tender for its replacement and a contractor has been appointed. That work should be starting shortly.

Westfield is 10 years old in 2021 and we would like to start thinking about that now. Should you have any ideas of how to commemorate this we would love to hear from you.

c Finance and Personnel committee

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

Cllr Wilkinson advised that the Finance and Personnel committee is a small committee and gave his thanks to Emily Merko, the Finance Officer for her help in preparing the finances for the Council and the office staff.

Precept - Cllr Wilkinson offered apologies for the increase in the precept this year and explained that it was necessary due to the decreased funding received from BaNES. He assured those present that the Council will attempt to keep any increases to a minimum.

Elections – the elections for Parish Council are on 2nd May and Cllr Wilkinson reiterated the point that it is a job that anyone can do and that it is not a political role.

Fun Day – Cllr Wilkinson thanked WAGS for all their support on Fun Day and said that any offer of help or support would be very welcome.

6. WESTFIELD’S GREEN AND OPEN SPACES

The Chairman introduced Cllr Ron Hopkins, Chair of the Green and Open Spaces Working Group.

As Vice Chairman of the Parish Council many interesting tasks fall across my desk, particularly encouraged when working with an energetic and progressive Chairman like ours

For example, many of you will recall the Neighbourhood plan we worked on for almost three years and which set legally in place last year and forms a set of clear parameters that BANES planning officers must work within when approving future developments for our Parish of Westfield.

This has led to many beneficial spin-off scenarios and indeed will continue doing so.

One of the spin-offs however is particularly interesting.

By way of explanation, when developments take place in our parish the developers are required to ensure that funding is in place to improve or develop

local infrastructure to accommodate the new residents that the development brings in or the employment opportunities it provides.

These funds are controlled and distributed by the local authority (BANES in our case) in the form of "Section 106" or, more recently "CIL" Community Infrastructure Levy.....

In Westfield we have several 106 and CIL payments reaching maturity where improvements to the green and leisure infrastructure is the given parameter. In order to ensure that we extract the maximum possible community advantage from this enviable position the parish council has set up a Green Spaces Advisory group to the extraction of these funds from the local authority processes and to pass recommendations to the full council about projects, costing, visual enhancement impact, community advantage etc..

Among many others we are currently researching, for example

- A paved perimeter walking/exercise pathway with public exercise equipment spaced out at regular intervals around Norton Hill Recreation Ground
- Creating a clean surface footpaths/cycleways along the historic route of the former Roman Road - Fosse Way and along the Waterside Valley
- Replacing non-functioning lighting along the Pit Path
- Building a new changing room block incorporating some social facilities at Westhill Gardens Recreation Ground.
- Developing and improving the existing play area in Shakespeare Road Area to also incorporate the latest thinking in Inclusive Play

This is an exciting project and we are particularly keen to get our local residents involved so we would welcome your involvement with suggestions about opportunities / locations / areas where better maintenance would be useful etc. If you would like to be involved please let the team here know you email address or come along to the next meeting and have your say.

7. YOUTH SERVICES IN WESTFIELD

Mr Sam Plummer of Youth Connect said that they are working with Westfield Parish Council to deliver youth services once a week. There are a range of services from targeted support for individuals to open access. It is the open access sessions that are being supported by the Parish Council. Youth Connect are in the process of becoming a charity. They currently have 25-30 young people accessing the services in Westfield. He introduced some young people to report on the activities of the youth services in Westfield. They gave accounts of why the service is important to them and how it had helped them in their personal lives.

Sam said that they are also looking for volunteers to help out with the weekly sessions.

8. BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Cllr Jackson gave the following report:

First, my apologies that I have in the past missed the Annual Meeting, being in Orkney in 2017 and Australia in 2018, but 'East –West, home's best', and I am very pleased to be here tonight and to answer questions.

I remain immensely proud of what we managed to achieve together to produce the Neighbourhood Plan, get through all the bureaucratic hurdles and see it accepted by popular vote at the referendum stage. Indeed, I imagine B&NES Council are fed up of hearing me boasting about your achievement, but the fact is that you have set an example to other councils. Full honours to our Clerk and her staff, too for all their hard work. It means that we now have a benchmark for the consideration of new planning applications such as the controversial RADCO application. It also means that Westfield residents can get a larger slice of the CIL cake in order to enhance our community.

2. Trying to create a sense of community as well as an awareness of Westfield's tangible achievements, and combatting the attitude of those who think that the edge of the known world is Maple Drive, remains a challenge. I send endless emails about parking perils in Longfellow Road, the issues Mardon's Club has, and the problems at Elm Tree Avenue, and drag officers and cabinet members out here. Endless patience (and re-election) is needed for this. Think how many years it has taken to get the double yellow lines you wanted, or the K6 telephone kiosk removed! If I started on the saga of the broken gate beside this church, B&NES' responsibility, or the broken bollard at COSTCO, this would be a very long report indeed.

3. I have continued to work with Cllr Geoff Fuller to help veterans, especially the homeless and traumatised and their families. We held a special community 1918 remembrance event on 11th November as I was Chair of Christians Together in Radstock and Westfield. We hope to continue this, if you wish, this time with more involvement from the British Legion, and get some commemorative art work.

4. It was a joy to take round the SW in Bloom 'outstanding' achievement certificates to the WAGS allotments and Westfield Primary School and to support the Westfield residents working at Ammerdown on another 'It's Your Neighbourhood' project, also deemed 'outstanding'. I delight in the daffodils WPC and I planted around here, and have supported all their efforts to get the grass cut on the public verges and green spaces. It is not a B&NES responsibility, but getting more allotments is a great parish council achievement.

5. I am a member of Radstock Youth Futures committee and support the youth work in Westfield. This has been very difficult as B&NES is shutting down

its non-statutory youth provision, and the outstanding professional youth workers have been made redundant. I have pushed B&NES officers, cabinet member and councillors as hard as I can to back the alternative provision proposed by the former club staff. Westfield has led the way here, with a programme continuing at our expense.

6. Holding the Health Commissioners to account is very hard work, but I am confident that at least our excellent pharmacy in West field is safe. Fighting to retain the 'community equipment' service free of charge for residents post-surgery has been another battle hopefully won, and I have worked, and am working to get better provision locally for those with mental health issues. It is getting those platitudes in the Mental Health Review adopted by the Council last week turned into concrete opportunities which will be the next battle.

7. Sometimes I feel I am standing on a sandcastle as the tide comes in, with all these council cuts, and more and with more being pushed onto parish councils. But with a team like Westfield Parish Council and with residents' support, I am sure we will win in the end. There is money available, and I am determined to get the fumes on the A367 properly monitored, and a local policy for cleaner air.

8. Meanwhile, it remains my aim that housing in Westfield should be well maintained if it belongs to a housing association, anti -social behaviour gets dealt with and planning produce the kind of affordable housing of the size and type you said you wanted in the Neighbourhood Plan. It is a privilege to be your B&NES councillor.

Eleanor Jackson

Cllr Robin Moss handed out some notes for attendees. He thanked the Chair for the invite to attend the meeting and said that it is quite unusual that Parish Councils and larger councils/government work together in harmony. He said that Parish Councils are often seen as the poor relation in government, but that this is wrong – Parish Councils have pick up the slack left by unitary authorities or county councils and he thanked Westfield Parish Council for being very effective in doing so, and for their support.

9. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

a. Parking on Longfellow Road and traffic in Wesley Avenue.

A resident of Longfellow Road asked why Fosseyway School staff are able to park on the road. Cllr Jackson replied that it was a condition of the new build that staff would have to park on site, which they don't appear to be doing. She has invited the Cabinet Minister for Transport and Environment to come along to the parish next week and will point out the inconsiderate parking.

b. Dog mess in Waterford Park.

A resident, who is also a dog walker, brought up the issue about dog mess in the area. He said he has contacted BaNES who said the Dog Warden will be visiting, but he hadn't seen them. It was pointed out that the dog has to be 'caught in the act' before any action could be taken. Cllr Jackson said that she has been pushing for more bins (dog mess bins and general waste bins are now the same) but without success. She and Cllr Moss said that they will push harder for more bins and for signs advising that there is a fine for not clearing up after your dog has messed in a public area

It was agreed to do a press release for the Journal highlighting the health issues of dog mess being left behind.

10. SUMMING UP AND CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

Cllr Fuller closed the meeting, thanking those that had spoken.

The meeting closed at 8:26pm