

WESTERLEIGH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Manor Hall, Coalpit Heath Monday April 9th 2018

Present: Parish Councillors: B Taylor (Chair), J Butler, A Fay, J Lean, T Clark, P King,
A Gibbs, S Blackmore SGC Ward Councillor C Young Parish Clerk S Simmons

1. Introduction

Cllr Bob Taylor started by welcoming everyone and outlining the Agenda. He asked all members of the Council to introduce themselves to the audience.

2. Approve the Minutes of the 2017 Annual Parish Meeting

Seven Councillors present were at the meeting on April 10th 2017 and confirmed the Minutes were a true record. They were signed by the Chairman.

3. Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council

Much of your Council's activity over the past year has been responding to consultations:

The major work was with the West of England Joint Spatial Plan, followed by South Glos Council's consultation on the Local Plan. Both of these are looking at developments to the area, including the provision of new homes and employment. Although many residents responded directly, these were long and complicated documents and needed the Council to provide a view on what is best for the Parish and the local area.

Similarly, there were consultations on the proposed junction 18a of the M4, the proposed changes to SGC ward boundaries from next year, and the proposed Blackberry Park housing development.

We have not yet seen any comprehensive plan for transport in South Glos beyond the high-level Joint Transport Strategy. In the absence of such a plan, the Council has not been enthusiastic about any proposals for more housing.

The Council has made some improvements to the Westerleigh play area, and similarly the Manor Hall play area has been funded and planned.

Work to improve the drainage of Westerleigh playing fields has also started, with the second phase waiting for drier weather to allow equipment to be driven onto the field without damaging it.

There have been additions to the picnic benches and tables at Bitterwell Lake.

The play areas, benches and the drainage work have been funded from the community development income that the Council receives from the Says Court Solar Farm.

The residents of Westerleigh received some good news in January, when Wessex Water revealed a plan to build a new sewer dedicated to the trade effluent from the Tulip meat processing factory. This will prevent the smells that the village has been suffering for many years.

Our Clerk, Fiona Thornton, retired last autumn, after a period of long-term sickness, and I'd like to express our gratitude for her service over some 10 years.

Sue Simmons has joined us as our permanent Clerk, and many of you will have already met her, as she has been with us for about one year, initially as Locum Clerk.

Finally, the Parish Council is in a fortunate position financially and we would welcome grant applications for local projects and from local groups. The application details are on our website under Community Benefits. They should be sent to Sue.

4. Reports from Organisations & Groups involved in the Parish

a) Ian Haddrell Frampton Festival

Firstly can I take this opportunity on behalf of the FF committee to thank Westerleigh PC for giving us the chance to speak. This year's FF is on Sat July 14th commencing at 2pm with Winterbourne Woodwind band opening the festival, and with a finale at 10pm of lighting the beacon in Centenary Field and a firework display. Last year 2,500 people enjoyed the show and this year popular attractions include Professor Panics Circus, steam engine rides, a dog show, and various fairground rides. Live music later by some local bands (new and established) and we are hoping that the winner of Winterbourne Academy Talent Show will be able to perform. There will also be a selection of stalls of local organisations and local businesses.

The Festival is a free community event and we wish to keep it so. Funding comes from grants, donations, sponsorship, ad space and generosity of people who value the event.

Money raised dictates what attractions we can provide and if there is a surplus we make donations to local groups eg last year Floral Friends of Frampton and for play equipment at Beesmoor Road playing field.

We are in discussions with FCPC regarding the continuation of the Festival in the Centenary Field. They have concerns about the decrease in biodiversity and want to keep the meadow grass longer in the summer which would have an impact on the festival. However the venue is secured for 2018 and 2019 and we hope to resolve the issues. I would like to conclude by thanking Westerleigh PC for its continued support and donation for this years festival.

b) Geraldine Jasper Manor Hall

The Chairman of Manor Hall sends his apologies. The objectives of Manor Hall Trustees are to preserve maintain and manage the much needed facilities on the site. There are a wide range of regular and casual events held at the hall including Little Explorers, Whizz Kids, Dancing groups, a Church group, Slimming club, ukulele group, yoga etc as well as private functions. It is from the hire revenue that we get our funds. We also hold quiz nights, and a regular community coffee morning on the 3rd Wednesday of every month. In July we have an event to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the opening of the original school.

We are currently renovating the annex to give a further small hire space although we may have to wait for more money. The new play area is being funded by this Parish Council and marks the Queens 90th birthday. The Community Garden is a quiet space available for all to enjoy and we have recently finished the Memorial Garden, now a smarter place - again paid for by this Parish Council.

The Trustees are all volunteers and we have just one paid employee – our Hall Manager who is available for advice and info to help the Trustees and the smooth running of Manor Hall. Volunteers work in the gardens and we could always use more.

Finally I would like to say a big thank you to this Parish Council for their continued support.

c) Becky Brown Citizens Advice Bureau

During the past year the CAB has helped 51 residents of Westerleigh Parish. Common areas needing advice are debt issues, claiming benefits or Tax Credits, and housing or homelessness. CAB offer a 10 minute chat to see what the problems are and can offer advice straightaway or make arrangements to help further.

It is calculated that those 51 residents benefitted by around £928 as a result of the advice given. Apart from the money its important to give people peace of mind, a better sense of wellbeing and more confidence and security. I'd like to thank Westerleigh Parish Council for this opportunity and their financial support.

d) Julie Doherty Avon Wildlife Trust at Says Court Farm

AWT have been funded for the past 4 years by Westerleigh PC to run a programme at Says Court Farm after the installation of the solar farm. The wildlife areas and walks are of great value to the community and local schools and the farmers are really engaged and supportive. We hold lots of family events, working with the Hawk & Owl Trust organising picnics, walks etc. On May 31st we have a Nature Hunt and the Hawk & Owl Trust will be there; in August

there's a picnic day; and later we will organise a Bat Walk. We work closely with some local schools and are providing resources which will enable them to continue their interest in wildlife both on the site and in school. We also have interesting resources for schools to borrow, bug boxes, kits for activities and so on. The public areas at Says Court Farm are flourishing, with thriving wildflower meadows all supported by the farmers. AWT want to encourage ongoing enjoyment of the area and are helping the farmers to manage the land so that the public can come along and enjoy the circular walk.

e) Patrick Mills Community use of Westerleigh Church

Many of you will be familiar with St James' Church as you drive through Westerleigh. It is a fine building, a Grade-1 listed monument dating back to the Middle Ages, set in a lovely churchyard, backing onto the playing field and Westerleigh Hill. Fine it is, but what on earth shall we do with it?

A few years ago, the roof of St James was in a terrible state and we in Westerleigh village had to decide whether to spend a lot of time, money and effort restoring it. With the help of grants from many sources, including from Westerleigh Council, we fixed the roof and it is now sound.

There is a regular Sunday service with a congregation of about 30 from Westerleigh, Yate, Pucklechurch and Chipping Sodbury. As well as church events and concerts, it is used for weddings throughout the year, for funerals and for monthly baptism celebrations for the people of Yate. For example we had two baptisms Sunday with 100 people present and some 20 children all happily taking part in the ceremony.

It is the largest building in the neighbourhood, and potentially a good resource for Westerleigh village and indeed for South Gloucestershire. Of course Westerleigh has the village hall, but that is heavily booked so there is little scope for new activities or events in the village. We believe the church building would provide a larger and more permanent space for community activities, exhibitions as well as concerts.

To be of any use to the community, we need toilets, a food servery and disabled access. So the churchwardens have asked the church architect to come up with refurbishment plans. She prepared some 10 options for us to consider, and we have whittled these down to one detailed plan, which we have presented to Historic England, the Church Buildings Council, the Diocese of Bristol and the South Gloucestershire Conservation Office and incorporated their advice. The architect submitted a formal planning request to Bristol Diocese last week.

We aim to seek funding from the Garfield Weston Foundation who have a special fund in celebration of their 60th anniversary. Experience from raising funds to repair the roof suggest that charities like to see a firm plan, which we now have, but they also like to see demonstrable local support.

For this we look to the Friends of St James, which is a non-church support group; they are holding some events this year to raise awareness of the project, and indeed the next is on Saturday week, a St George's Day evening in Westerleigh Village Hall

So the plan is to open up the church for community use, install toilets, a servery and disabled access and undertake a general refurbishment of the interior, but alterations to ancient buildings take for ever, and we may not be able to do it all in one go, however we are making steady progress and we would encourage you to support the project.

A question was asked about bell ringing and Mr Mills confirmed practices are on Wednesdays and bells are rung on Sundays. New members are welcome!

f) David Hardill, Community Heritage Officer, Yate & District Heritage Centre

Yate and District Heritage Centre is pleased to have been able to serve the parishioners of Westerleigh during the 2017 to 2018 period - Through the generosity of parishes such as Westerleigh we have been able to continue to provide a flourishing heritage and education service. Local Westerleigh schools make use of our school sessions on a regular basis and we urge them to continue to use, what is an increasingly rare, free service. We are also pleased to maintain our school holiday provision with direct assistance from this Council and we hope to see as many Westerleigh parishioners at our events in 2018 including the forthcoming St George Celebrations. Yate Heritage Centre is free and open regularly for people to visit and we are always happy to share knowledge and information from people with a knowledge of and interest in the Westerleigh area.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions and closed the meeting