

# WESTERLEIGH & COALPIT HEATH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Monday April 26<sup>th</sup> 2021 7pm on Zoom

Hosted by the Chair of Westerleigh Parish Council

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Cllr Rob McCullough, the Chair of Westerleigh Parish Council welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish meeting. He explained that this is an informal session where anyone can ask questions – it's not a formal Council meeting!

Apology was received from Cllr Tristan Clark who had to attend another meeting.

The presenters were welcomed.

## 1. Cllr Rob McCullough – Chair of Westerleigh Parish Council

As there was no Annual Parish Meeting in 2020 due to the COVID-19 lockdown, Cllr McCullough gave a summary of how the last two years Parish Council grant funds have been spent:

The Parish Council has been fortunate to receive increased income over the last two years due to money being received from the Blackberry Park development and other house builders as well as the benefit we get each year from the Solar Farm at Says Court.

**This has meant we have been able to approve many grant applications, TOTTALLING £45000 over the 2 years which include**

Money to Manor Hall

Money to Avon Wildlife Trust who run activities at Says Court Farm

Pauls Place to fund a new TV

Frampton Festival Committee

Yate Heritage Centre for activity days

New practice nets for Coalpit Heath Cricket Club

A beautiful bench to commemorate Dick King Smiths connection to the area on the Blackberry Path

Equipment for Scout activities at Serridge Lane

Improvements to access for Westerleigh field and Replacement play equipment at Newman field & funds for Beesmoor Rd play area

Community Fruit trees at Pansy Vale

Westerleigh Newsletter and defibrillator battery

For Green Community Travel minibuses we were able to help with the cleaning misters needed so they could function during the pandemic.

**Further afield - facilities that will benefit our residents for**

The Brightwell MS Therapy Centre

Chemo equipment for local hospital via Above & Beyond

Great Western Air Ambulance

The Severn Area Rescue Association

On top of this we have been able to provide additional support to all our work being done at Bitterwell Lake which locals can enjoy

for fishing, walking, picnicking and so on.

This year one project already planned is to site more defibrillators around the Parish, and funding the Swift Activity Days for Primary children started in the Easter 2021 holidays.

**The Parish Council will receive significant amounts of developer money again this year so we really encourage local groups to come and talk to us about their projects and how we might be able to help financially.**

## **2. Mary Head Church Warden from St Saviours**

Thank you for the opportunity for coming along this evening to report on behalf of St. Saviours Church.

Firstly thank you to the donors of the grant towards replacing the church hall floor, I can report it looks excellent and will be great for the groups in the community who use it.

We are hoping to begin using the hall for some groups mid-May, conforming to all Covid 19 regulations.

Also grateful thanks for the work cleaning and repainting the names of the War Memorial. It looks resplendent and I am sure families of those whose names appear on the memorial will feel comforted that members of their families are still remembered by the community. We have already had some positive responses.

We have as a church been open when we have been allowed during the lockdowns and have had a regular congregation, The vicar has written to members of the congregation every month, and telephone calls have been made to the congregation over the past year on a regular basis by other members of the clergy team. We have already produced a weekly podcast for those shielding available from the church website.

Our Butterflies mums and toddlers group have just restarted in the small adjoining field to the hall and it was great to see the children having space to run around and play with the balls and parachutes. Also to see the mums having a chance to be able to have time to chat.

As Covid restrictions ease we will be able to allow groups to return to the hall subject to the rules. It will be good to see the hall being used for the community and church again. Our first big event will be the Horticultural Show in September, it has been a challenge to work out how we will manage this, but with one way systems and a slightly different way of booking in all will be well.

Our vicar Rev Colin Lunt, has also announced his retirement from 13th June 2021. This will be his last day.

We will miss him but wish him a happy retirement and more time to spend with his family especially his grandchildren.

## **3. Brian Cotterell Westerleigh Neighbourhood Watch group**

This year's Watch meetings took place via Zoom and regulars are looking forward to the time when they can meet and plan in the pub. Despite the cancellation of many of the intended events of 2020 the village Watch still managed a few items to brighten the village in the future and add colour to our neighbourhood as you venture out.

Pansy vale saw the planting of spring flowers which are probably just showing signs of pushing through now. In autumn a few fruit trees funded by the Parish Council were also planted with the aim that villagers can pick a snack whilst on the daily exercise, eventually.

December saw the erection of the Christmas tree with some additional decorations by local children. As a village group we are always keen to have more supports to develop ideas. There is a Fun Day on July 24<sup>th</sup> on the Playing Field from 12 – 5pm.

Litter continues to be an issue and any help via the PC or SGC is welcome.

#### **4. Avon wildlife Trust – Irene Correia**

Irene gave an overview of the work AWT due for the Parish Council at Says Court Farm reserve funded by the Solar Farm project income since 2016. AWT run programmes of community engagement and education. This has included Wild Wednesdays (and Saturdays) with Bug Hunts, Signs of Spring detective hunts, dissecting owl pellets, Owl Prowl, Painting in Nature among other activities.

The local schools have benefitted from extra ways to enhance Science & Geography, including renewable energy education of the impact of the solar farm on wildlife and the area.

The funding also allowed a placement to take place which has led to the candidate now working in this sector of environmental projects. Look out for more activities coming soon and spread the word when you see it on the Parish Council facebook page or website.

#### **5. Green Community Travel – Jenny Bright**

Jenny started by thanking the Parish Council for funding the Zap misters which help sanitise the minibuses during the COVID-19 pandemic. GCT is 1 of 3 community transport providers around South Glos and provides accessible transport where people have mobility issues as well as where local transport isn't close enough, or timings don't match the requirements. During the lockdown they helped by delivering shopping, prescriptions and for SGC emergency food parcels.

Recently booked for trips to the hairdressers – as life slowly returns to normal!

Jenny wanted to thank all the volunteers who have helped and those who couldn't but are now able to restart car driving from the beginning of May. In mid May trips out may be possible for 6 at a time to maintain distancing.

All Health & Safety measures are in place and volunteers carry out the lateral flow tests provided by GCT.

They have had support from the Parish Council, SGC, WECA for which Jenny thanked everyone concerned.

They have 14 minibuses and 3 accessible cars.

#### **6. Swift Sports Coaching – Ryan Elsbury & Nick Smith**

Ryan thanked WPC for funding Activity Days for Key Stage 2 children from Manor Hall and Immanuel School. The first 4 days were able to take place during the 2021 Easter school holidays, and 2 days are planned for the next half term week.

Swift have still been able to provide activities during the pandemic in adapted ways – extra PE lessons for children who were in school and sports activities, working with authorities across South Gloucestershire.

They are also proud to be part of the HAF programme providing activities and free meals where required. **Swift have provided a few pages about their services and this can be found at <http://www.westerleighparishcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Swift-2021-APM.pdf>**

## 7. Paul's Place – Daniel Cheesman

### Our Year in Lockdown!

Could I start by thanking the Parish Council for inviting me to speak on behalf of Paul's Place and for the support that we have received over the years as a charity, most recently with our new television.

2020 was a big year for Paul's Place as we reached the landmark birthday of 25 years old. The year however did not turn out to be the year that we had planned – the balloons are yet to be blown up and the birthday cake is yet to be cut. That said an eventful year was had.

Paul's Place is a charity that enhances life for physically disabled adults, supporting them to live life to the full. Based in Coalpit Heath our day-break service was used to supporting 35 to 40 people a day. On 18<sup>th</sup> March, just days before the Government announced the lockdown, we made the difficult decision to close our doors and within 24 hours we had set up the Paul's Place Emergency Project.

We went from supporting people daily in a day facility to supporting people virtually through telephone calls and providing, in the early stages of the lockdown shopping and medical supplies – us and Southern Brooks. Through the summer months we developed an online service, now known as Paul's Place at Home. In nine months, we made:

- 4000 telephone support calls to disabled people
- 1,330 hours offered hosting online activities to our Members
- 460 hours of online meetings with carers.

Towards the end of the summer and into the autumn we started to arrange community meets ups outside for disabled people and visited people at home were possible.

We reopened our doors on 1<sup>st</sup> September before shutting them again in November and again in December – due to further lockdowns.

The doors reopened once again on 6<sup>th</sup> April and we are now supporting people through our day-break service. 15 a day at Coalpit Heath and a further 10 in Thornbury. This is a phased reopening inline with the government roadmap.

The challenges over the last year have been the constant changes and managing individuals worries and anxieties. We have seen the mental health of our members decline, people have been isolated, and cares have found themselves exhausted and back in a full-time caring role. We have also found it challenging to fundraise and expect another year of uncertainty to raise funding.

The positives have been that we are now a charity that has embraced the digital world, and this is positive for Members. We have been able to tell our story again and a rebrand and launch of a new website and new social media channels has helped us to tell our story.

*Mary from St Saviours was pleased to tell Daniel that a cheque is on its way to Pauls Place from an online Lent Soup Lunch that they held.*

## **8. Manor Hall trustees report**

Thank you for this opportunity to tell you about the Manor Hall at Coalpit Heath and our plans for the future.

In this most challenging of years, we are proud to have served our local community and user groups by keeping our doors open at every possibility, while adapting to the new restrictions due to Covid-19. This has ensured the continuation of the vital childcare provided by the Little Explorers Preschool, and provided a COVID-19 secure venue for 3 support groups, 2 of which came to us as their venues were closed. Other groups and classes were also able to return when restrictions allowed, offering their benefits to the local community.

Our valued volunteers and contractors have continued to work hard behind the scenes supporting our Hall Manager, Alison Allan, who has worked tirelessly to make sure that the hall is a COVID-19 safe environment and will be ready for when all groups are able to return.

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution and considerable support of the staff and management of Little Explorers Preschool, our contract cleaners, Beacon Cleaning, all our volunteers, and the grant support from the government received via South Glos Council, all of which helped make this possible. We have also received considerable support from Action in Communities in Rural England (ACRE) and Dick Whittington of the West of England Rural Network (WERN) who have provided us with guidance on COVID-19 regulations and safe working practices. Our Hall Manager ran a Macmillan coffee fundraiser in September with help from local Scouts who erected their marquee in the car park to give safe outside space, raising £450 of much needed funds for Macmillan.

A number of maintenance projects have been completed in the last year for example repairs to the floor, toilets, and repainting of the main corridor to name just a few.

We have also completed a full refurbishment of the bell and its tower which has been put back into working order, once again able to ring out across Coalpit Heath as it did in days gone by. The trustees are planning an event to commemorate this later in the year.

The community garden remains a place of solace for many and our volunteers have been able to keep it in tip top condition for those who have visited.

This year we have managed to get all the trees professionally pruned and we are hoping that we will again get a bumper crop of apples and plums.

With grant money from our local councillors, we have been able to install a hearing loop which will be of great benefit to a number of groups who use the hall. We would like to express our gratitude to Claire Young, Tristan Clark and Jon Lean for their financial support.

Future plans include refurbishment of our outside storage room and the house attached to the hall, upgrades to our water supply to replace the lead pipes and new fire doors to the Jubilee room.

The trustees remain committed to ensuring that the Hall, a grade 2 listed building, is maintained to a high standard and offers a venue suitable for hire to the community.

As always one of our challenges remains financing our various projects and Westerleigh Parish council support has always been invaluable in helping with this.

The trustees would like to thank the Parish Council for this support over many years and look forward to working with you in the future.

On behalf of the Trustees  
Manor Hall Coalpit Heath CIO

## **9. Bitterwell Lake & Fishery**

Bitterwell lake has undergone massive improvement and gone from strength to strength since September 2019 working in partnership with Westerleigh Parish Council.

Soon the new tuck shed will be opening which will offer hot drinks, snacks, bait and tackle. There is a new seating area which will support the tuck shed give people the perfect place to sit an

enjoy the lake with a tea or coffee. This will appear on the Bitterwell Lake FB page and on the Parish Council page

Activities available at Bitterwell Lake include

Day fishing (free for residents of the Parish by getting a permit from the Parish Clerk);

Fishing coaching for individuals or groups can be booked by the hour;

Night fishing ( by pre-booking only) ;

Young angler days - These are on selected Saturdays at Bitterwell Lake and are to promote angling and encourage young people to get involved with fishing. The young angler days are based around a 3 hour fishing match which includes medals trophies and prizes. So far this has been a real success with 16 kids taking part on the last young angler day. Parents are also encouraged to assist and take part and this has also helped to create a great atmosphere at the lake.

Bitterwell lake junior fishing team. Bitterwell Lake has entered a team into the junior national this September on the Shropshire and Union canal. Other team activities will be organised and there will be coaching and preparing the junior team to get them ready for the big day. The team also has their own hoodys and sponsorship for bait at the national.

Bitterwell lake is now also working with an educational provision for young people called MIAG who help to transition young people back into school. This is mainly through fishing coaching at Bitterwell Lake.

New fish stocked in November 2020. Lots of small carp were introduced after a very kind donation from Mark Bryant at Baitworks. These new fish are now part of the Bitterwell Lake family and will hopefully go on to provide great sport for the future.

Thank you.

**The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions.**

**Sue – the Parish Clerk reiterated that there is a significant pot of money from grants so local groups are welcome to apply.**

**The 3 vacancies for Parish Councillors were also highlighted and everyone asked to consider if they know of a person who lives or works in the area that would like to be part of helping their community and meeting new people. Councillor Goddard added that she is the newest Councillor and has thoroughly enjoyed getting involved and becoming part of the team and her community.**

**Anyone interested can contact Sue for an informal chat or more information.**

**Sue also told the attendees that from the June meeting it is hoped that Parish Council meetings will be real-life meetings at Westerleigh village Hall and Manor Hall, with certain COVID guidance in place. Details will appear on the agendas when published on our website and facebook page.**

#### **Approval of the previous Minutes – from April 2019**

These were proposed to be accepted by Bob Taylor and seconded by Rob McCullough, as a true record of the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting.

CLlr McCullough thanked everyone for the hard work they have done over the last year through challenging circumstances – all part of a great community!

The meeting ended just before 8pm