

WESTERLEIGH & COALPIT HEATH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Tuesday April 11th 2023 at Henfield Hall, Ram Hill, Henfield

Hosted by Councillor Rob McCullough, Chair of Westerleigh Parish Council

Councillor Rob McCullough, Chair of Westerleigh Parish Council, opened the meeting.

Apologies were received from Alison Davis, the Brightwell.

17 members of the public were in attendance.

The presenters were welcomed.

- 1. The minutes of the last Annual Parish meeting held on Monday 11th April 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting and duly signed.**
- 2. Nicholas Smith, Swift Sports Coaching – on Children's Holiday Activity days held in the Parish**

First please let me thank you for your trust in Swift Sports Coaching to deliver the Free Holiday Club provision for Westerleigh and Coalpit Heath Parish Council. This would not be possible without your support. Both ourselves at Swift, the parents and carers and of course the children who attend, are incredibly grateful and appreciate this opportunity. The holiday club programme has been a massive success across the board.

Our parish events mirror our very successful and well-established holiday club format. Children sign in at 10am and participate in games, activities and sports throughout the day until 4pm when they are collected. Activities include

- Archery,
- Football tournaments,
- Nerf battlegrounds,
- Dodgeball,
- Football challenges,
- Nerf Shooting range,
- Tag games,
- Ninja Training.

We have recently increased our promotional efforts to help continue to grow the provision's exposure and attendance.

- Began Working more closely with Immanuel Christian School, offer term time services.
- Offering taster sessions and after school clubs at The Manor Primary.

For each event hosted on behalf of Westerleigh and Coalpit Heath Parish Council, we collect data using our online booking system and provide this data to the parish, enabling you to measure the reach, scope and impact of the events and by extension, your funding.

Over the past two years of provision we have had a total of 388 unique bookings, meaning 388 children have attended the holiday club at some point. However, on average children attend multiple days across the year with the most popular booking being 3 days per holiday club event.

On average our attendees are 63% boys and 37% girls. We have seen in recent events an increase in the amount of girls attending and this trend has continued.

As you can appreciate, the majority of our attendees are students at the Manor Primary School with a small amount of children attending from Immanuel Christian and other schools. As students of Immanuel Christian School travel from all over Bristol and South Glos to attend there, this is to be expected.

The clubs are open to anyone from the age of 4 to 12. The trend in age of our attendees is very similar to our paying holiday provision in the local area. Many parents and carers of older children may not require the childcare. The programme is heavily utilised by parents and carers of younger children.

We regularly speak with parents and carers both in the booking period and during the events themselves, drop off and collection. We ask for in person feedback and we often send out feedback forms electronically. Swift Sports Coaching as a company is always striving to improve and takes customer feedback very seriously and views this as an essential part of improving our services to all our customers including yourselves.

We have experienced few difficulties in operating the events as a whole, we hope that the councillors can agree that any issues that have arisen Swift have dealt with quickly and efficiently. For example, early on in the provision there were many parents booking onto the clubs that were not eligible to attend due to their geographic location. Our online booking system is comprehensive and very thorough, but operates on good faith. After consultation with Sue we changed the promotion and booking process to limit this issue as best as we possibly can. As a result our admin team have seen a reduction in in-eligible parents trying to book.

A big thanks to Dee who has helped us organise use of the Westerleigh Village Hall for all events up to this point. We have been in ongoing contact with Dean who runs the Scout Hut in Coalpit Heath and we have discussed the possible use of this venue for future events. The advantages of moving the venue would be access to indoor space. It is also reasonably secluded so would have less impact or interference from the general public. Finally, with the extra distance from Yate, fewer in-eligible parents are expected to try to access the service.

The full report can be viewed on our website – [here](#).

3. Geraldine Jasper, Chair of Trustees, Manor Hall

We would like to thank the Parish Council for the opportunity to represent the Manor Hall at this meeting and for their support over many years and with reference in particular to the past twelve months.

We are a registered charity, you will notice we are a CIO – meaning Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The Management Team is currently seven trustees and one employee, our Hall Manager Alison Allan. Alison is responsible for the day to day running of the hall. Alison is involved at all levels of hall business and is the first point of contact for all users, contractors and visitors. We have very structured processes in place to keep lines of communication open, giving the whole team the opportunity for involvement in hall business and decision making. We are generally a very efficient team, but always on the look-out for new trustees, the main attributes required being an

interest in the hall and the local community and with time to attend monthly meetings and occasional events.

We emerged from the Pandemic in a reasonably healthy state, but much of our concentration this year has been given to getting back to pre-Covid status. The hall is now very busy and our bookings are gradually increasing: we have over twenty groups who regularly use the hall. Our user groups are very diverse including dance, exercise groups – including chair Pilates and yoga, karate, Slimming World, church groups, gardening club, meditation, relaxation etc. Every day during term time we have Little Explorers Pre-School which has just earned an Ofsted Outstanding award for the second time in succession, which we feel is an exceptional achievement.

On a monthly basis we host a pop-up vegan supper club (greenhouse plant-based dining), which is hugely popular with tickets selling out as soon as they are available. Only yesterday they opened bookings for August to December and were totally booked within a few hours. If you want to try this dining option you will now have to wait until 2024!

In conjunction with the regular users we have plenty of ad hoc bookings. The Jubilee Room is especially popular for private parties, in particular children's discos, soft and role play parties. We have seen an increase in family parties such as baby showers, christenings, baby naming ceremonies etc. all wanting a pleasant, affordable venue where they can self-cater and bring their own drinks.

Rooms are also hired for meetings including our own meetings and events of course.

Another very popular event is the Harry Potter Potion Class. We certainly have very diverse activities at the hall, hopefully catering for the complex needs of our local community.

We have three rooms within the main hall, each with differing capacities. We also have the Red Brick Annex which is smaller, but fully equipped to work independently of the main building.

Our beautiful Community Garden remains a peaceful haven, not only for local residents to enjoy, but also the local wildlife. As stated in last year's report, two volunteer gardeners retired after many years of hard work and commitment. They have been greatly missed. Fortunately, we still had one remaining garden volunteer and we have gained the services of a second, both taking care of the grass cutting. We have a third volunteer who weeds and maintains the car park, but more garden help is required, so if you know anyone who would like to give us some help, we would be very grateful. As we all know any garden can be hard work and ours is no exception. Our Hall Manager spends a great deal of time trying to keep everything tidy and under control, whilst adding (and donating) lots of bursts of seasonal colour for our visitors to enjoy.

Coalpit Heath WI have a small plot within the garden that they maintain.

We also benefited from four days of volunteering from four AVIVA volunteers who treated the garden shed and gazebo.

We have a number of apple and plum trees in the garden which local residents are encouraged to come in and collect once they have fruit. We have one elderly lady who regularly collects apples and makes tarts which she then distributes in the community, telling everyone where the delicious apples were picked. We like to hear these stories.

The continuous maintenance of the Grade II Listed Manor Hall and its curtilage is expensive. We have a formal business plan which ensures we stay on track and use our funds wisely, ensuring the

big projects are scheduled in as well as the day to day maintenance programme. It's always a juggling act. We have only a few weeks ago completed the second section of the car park resurfacing which was a major expenditure, but we have also undertaken many large and small projects throughout the year. Our main income stream is from hire charges. During the last financial year we managed to increase income by about one third on the previous year, but obviously that year we were still impacted by the Pandemic.

We are slowly re-instating our social events and we held our very popular 'Taste of Christmas' in December. It was so fantastic to see the hall full of residents again. The atmosphere was very relaxed and festive and we have already programmed the event again for the coming Christmas. In March we had what we term as a musical evening. We had a live local group, The Rulettes. The evening was a sell-out: it was fantastic with the attendees clamouring for more. Both events raised small, but much needed funds, but most importantly brought life into the hall and gave local people the opportunity to enjoy our beautiful venue.

We would like to, once again, thank the Parish Council for their ongoing support. This year we received just shy of £9,000 from them which helped cover the cost of drain and roof repairs, work to the wooden A frame, exterior painting to the Red Brick Annex, lobby window refurb, replacement of the outside light and removal of outside trunking. Without this valuable support we would not be able to provide the level of service to the local community that we currently do. We also received our final Covid Grant of £2,667 which we used on acoustic curtains and decoration to the Jubilee Room.

The trustees with our Hall Manager, continue the task of maintaining and improving the facilities and the integrity of our beautiful 1868 building, with the help and support of our users and, of course, the Parish Council. Thank you.

4. Dean Ashpole-Chapman, Cotswold Edge District Scouts - Mafeking Hall redevelopment

Dean gave a comprehensive update on the redevelopment of the Mafeking Hall Scout Hut on Serridge Lane. The original hall was demolished in 2021 following a successful planning application for a new hall. The new hall has been constructed on a screw pile base, a more environmentally-friendly solution which will allow the site to be returned to its original state more easily should the building need to be removed in future.

The timber building construction started in January 2022 for a hall with a main hall, meeting room/office, kitchen and accessible toilet. Unfortunately, due to the very dry summer affecting the screw piles, the building moved significantly by September. Remedial work has now been undertaken to stabilise the building and the internal fit is now underway. Volunteers are undertaking this work along with work to the outside space. The building should be ready for July 2023, with an opening event pencilled in for September 2023. The Parish Council was invited to come along and see the finished building as well as to use it as a future meeting venue. It is also anticipated that the building will be used by a range of community groups, the Swift Sports free holiday club and the Edventure Project.

Rob congratulated Dean on the huge amount of work that has gone into this project and all present were excited to see it finally open and start being used. The full report can be viewed on our website – [here](#).

5. Emily Simmons – Henfield Hall

Welcome to Henfield Hall.

Some history to start. The land Henfield Hall stands on was gifted to the community by Ernest Newman (then of Box Hedge Farm) to Westerleigh Parish Council (as Trustees) on 27th of March 1947. It was given for the benefit of the residents of the Henfield and New Engine districts of Westerleigh Parish, for the purposes of building a village hall. This village hall (I am using the exact wording from the deed of gift here) was to be “held upon trust for the purposes of physical and mental training and recreation and social moral and intellectual development through the medium of reading and recreation rooms library lectures classes recreations and entertainment or otherwise as may be found expedient for the benefit of the inhabitants of Henfield and New Engine districts of the Parish of Westerleigh.... Without distinction of sex or of political religious or other opinions”. So, Henfield hall had an anti-discrimination/diversity policy from the outset.

The details of the parcel of land is laid out in a deed of gift now lodged at Gloucestershire Archives. The Parish Council also holds a copy.

The first hall building was wooden and purchased as a complete building using funds raised by the community and a loan, in 1948. It has been suggested that it may have been an old RAF building. We don't have a documented history, but speaking to people who have lived in the area and been on the committee for many years, it is clear that the hall has been altered and upgraded over the years supported by fund raising. The original wooden walls have been replaced with brick over the years, probably starting with the toilet end of the building. Someone who attended a recent event (and lived on Ram Hill as a young man), remembered a sponsored table tennis game and cream tea which helped to raise the funds for the back wall nearest the lake when this needed replacing. The current porch and storage area was originally a wooden veranda, but was replaced (we think in the early 80's) with the current structure housing the accessible toilet and kitchen. Also in the 80's a suspended ceiling was installed in the hall to help with heat retention and this has since been replaced with the plaster ceiling you see today. The wooden roof was replaced with the tiled roof and windows have been changed from wooden single glazed to UPVC double glazed. Many years ago, there was a stage where the bar area now is, but this was moved to its current location when the bar was fitted out. The updating continues, with the electrical supply boards having been replaced earlier this year to improve efficiency and safety, and the water supply uprated from the old lead pipe in the past year, amongst other things. Any funds surplus to the day-to-day expenses of the hall are put back into further improvements with work to the bar area being next on the agenda. These improvements are costly and so the fundraising also continues.

The Parish Council were generous enough to give us a grant towards replacement of the wooden kitchen door which was rotting and insecure. We have been pleased with the improvement to appearance, security and reduction in drafts. We hope to replace the main front door as soon as we can and would be very grateful if we can prevail upon the Parish Council to help with the cost of that too. We also continue to explore other avenues for grant funding, for example “Wickes” have a community funding possibility. The hall has also received a Covid grant which will be put towards improvements.

That is a bit about the hall itself. Moving on to the management and use of the hall.

The hall was to be run by a committee of trustees which it was, and is still now. The Hall (then Known as “Henfield Social Club”) was registered as a charity on 21st of July 1969. Most members of the current committee are registered as trustees.

The committee meets monthly and is responsible for the (voluntary) management of the hall. Our AGM is here next week at 7pm on 17th of April if anyone here today would like to attend. We are always looking for more volunteers with any skills they would like to lend to help the community.

The current committee are working hard to bring the administration of the hall up to date with policies and procedures fit for the 21st century. Online banking has been a challenge to set up. We have made a start on joining social media (Facebook) and are advertising our events widely online and the old-fashioned way of posters and word of mouth.

Of course the hall was intended to provide a service to the community.

In the past, the hall was very busy with social events such as Harvest festival, Christmas Fayres, barn dances. It even had a bar and was run as a social club. I grew up on Ram Hill, and remember entering the harvest festival competitions and the jumble sales I attended there as a child.

Times changed though, and these events became less well attended and stopped being run. The hall continued to be used and the monthly coffee morning was a fixture in the local social calendar. Social activities continued on a more low-key basis, and a church used the hall for weekly services for some time.

As everyone did, we had a long shut down over Covid, but we are very pleased to have built up activities again since then, and the coffee morning is back and increasing in attendance each month. We have several regular users including dog training clubs, a gaming (war games) club, and an educational charity called Edventure project. We have two coffee mornings, one run by the hall committee and one run by the residents of Greenacres park. We have hosted the Avon Wildlife Trust for talks and activities, and are now hosting the Parish Council for occasional meetings as well. We have a book exchange (asking a small donation towards the hall upkeep). This month saw the first table tennis session which was well received by those who attended. We hope this will become a regular monthly event going forwards. In the range of activities we are hosting we endeavour to cover the aims as set out in the original deed of gift.

The committee are always happy to receive any suggestions regarding new activities to consider and, of course, any offers from potential volunteers. At the very least, you are welcome to come along and enjoy coffee and cake at our next coffee morning on Wednesday 3rd of May.

6. Cllr Rob McCullough , Westerleigh Parish Council - update from the Parish Council

Thank you for coming and thank you to all of our contributors this evening.

2023 will be a year of change for this Parish Council. From May a new Council will be formed and we change our name to Westerleigh and Coalpit Heath Parish Council - a name that much better reflects all the communities that we serve.

The Parish Council is allocated nine positions across the Parish and as there are only seven nominations for the new Council, including a brand new person, they will automatically take office on May 9th.

After many years as a Parish Councillor and many of them as Chair, Bob Taylor has decided to leave the Council. Myself, all the Councillors and Sue our Clerk, would really like to give him a massive thank you for all his support and hard work over the years, and we hope we will see him in Westerleigh often.

We now see that the Parish Council will be two Councillors short, one short for Westerleigh village and one short for Coalpit Heath, so we can co-opt by voting in suitable and eligible candidates that might come along during the next four years.

Therefore, we are very keen to chat to anyone who would like to find out more about being involved with their local community. It's a great way to meet people and find out what's happening locally as well as putting your own thoughts and ideas forward for future projects and influencing local decisions.

You can always contact me or the Clerk, Sue, if you'd like to find out what is involved, or come along to a couple of our once a month meetings first to see what happens. (One is straight after this!)

An important note about the local elections on May 4th for South Gloucestershire Council. There is a new requirement to take photo ID along when you go to vote, so take a driving licence/passport with you to the polling station. Please contact SGC this week directly for any queries or to register a postal vote.

Rachel is well installed as Sue's Deputy so we've been able to get a lot more projects completed or underway in the last year.

The Parish Council has benefitted once again this year from substantial funds from developers enabling us to invest in local projects and grants to community organisations such as those you have heard about. More on that in a moment.

This year we continue to have an accumulated pot which will enable us to fund projects for the next few years and we continue to receive almost £20,000 each year from the Says Court Solar Farm agreement, which we invest in community and environmental projects and grants.

We recognise that the last year has been challenging for many of our residents who have faced the pressures of rising energy bills and the cost of living crisis.

As well as signposting support provided by Yate and other neighbours, we gave a grant to help set up a warm space in Westerleigh Village Hall in January and February. Thank you to the hardworking volunteers who organised those four sessions, led by Carol. They baked cakes, served hot drinks and warming soup and provided a truly 'warm welcome' to around 20 local residents each session.

For young people we have continued to fund our popular free school holiday sports programme, once again engaging Swift Sports Coaching to deliver 20 sessions over the year. These sessions will continue this year in school holidays.

Last June, we celebrated the Queen's Platinum Jubilee by presenting every child at the Manor Primary School and Immanuel School in Westerleigh with a customised Jubilee mug and in May they will all get a King Charles III Coronation medal.

From April we will be making a £4,500 contribution to the youth services run in neighbouring Frampton Cotterell Parish because many of our area's young people attend. These include a youth café in Crossbow Park pavilion and youth club sessions at the Brockeridge Centre.

We have also supported the Edventure project, providing a venue for their outdoor education sessions here at Newman's Field in Henfield. Young people attending have made a positive contribution to the local community carrying out litter picks, volunteering at a local stable and their next project is building a bug hotel for us on the field.

We have extended our provision of automated defibrillators to the parish area by fitting a new unit at St Saviour's Church Hall. This was followed by another free CPR training session provided to locals.

We are very much looking forward to the opening of the brand new Mafeking Hall Scout Hut, which you have heard about this evening. This facility will benefit many local groups and has received a £21,000 grant from this council.

Finally on this theme, I am delighted to announce a major refurbishment of the play area at Westerleigh Playing Field which will be happening in the next few weeks and includes a futuristic new climbing tower and slide unit to replace the ageing wooden equipment. New swings including an accessible birds 'nest swing will be installed, to ensure that children of all abilities can enjoy the play area together. The project should be completed in time for the King's Coronation weekend and the Westerleigh Fun Day on June 10th.

Enhancing the local environment has been another important focus for us over the last year, with lots more projects planned for the coming year.

We have replaced 17 of the parish's 26 public bins with smart green dual use bins or dog bins, helping local residents to keep the parish litter and dog mess free.

In Blackberry Park we have worked with the developers Barratts, to deliver a new community noticeboard on the estate. This has recently been installed and will provide space for both Parish Council and community notices.

We have continued to invest in the facilities at Bitterwell Lake this year to enhance its enjoyment by local residents and anglers, but unfortunately have lots of remedial work to carry out after recent heavy rain levels.

As part of our commitment to enhancing biodiversity in our parish we have agreed a three-year Local Nature Action Plan. This year we have planted more trees at Newman's Field, donated a hedgehog house to St James Church and installed a bug hotel at Westerleigh Playing Field. We have also worked with volunteers to draw up nature-friendly management plans for all seven of our green spaces. The first plan is being implemented at Pansy Vale opposite the Wot Not in Westerleigh. Here we are creating a community orchard and wildflower meadow that should become a haven for pollinators and other insects. Work on our other sites will start soon, as will a joint project with Frampton Cotterell Parish Council to help our local hedgehogs. We have liaised with our grass cutting contractors to leave wild margins at Westerleigh Playing Field to enhance

biodiversity. We are also identifying suitable sites for future wildlife pond creation and additional tree-planting.

Finally, I want to alert you to planning matters that you may want to look out for.

It is possible that the next 12 months may see the re-emergence of a major developer application in Coalpit Heath. We will always make sure that relevant information is posted on our Facebook Page, website, in our minutes and on noticeboards. Also look out for information from South Gloucestershire Council.

The next phase of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan will be issued for consultation later this year and whilst the Parish Council will be engaging fully with the consultation on your behalf, we cannot stress enough how important it is that local residents take the opportunity to get involved and comment.

Well that's it from me. Once again thank you for coming and I hope you can encourage more residents to chat to us about being a Parish Councillor so we can continue all these good things.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions.

The meeting ended at 7.45pm.