

WESTERLEIGH & COALPIT HEATH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Monday April 28th 2025, 6.30pm at Manor Hall, Coalpit Heath

Hosted by Councillor Rob McCullough, Chair of Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath Parish Council

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

12 members of the public were in attendance.

The Clerk and Finance Officer to the Parish Council were also in attendance.

- 1. Apologies were received from Cllr Tristan Clark, Ward Cllr Ben Stokes, Ward Cllr David Goodwin, Sophie Kinsman (Paul's Place), Victoria Hocquard (The Brightwell MS Centre)**
- 2. The minutes of the last Annual Parish meeting held on Monday April 22nd 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting and duly signed.**

The presenters were welcomed.

3. Jenny Bright – Green Community Travel

At present we have 22 passengers registered from the Westerleigh and Coalpit Heath Parish, we always see a slight downturn at the start of the year, but hope these numbers increase in the coming months.

Annually we generally provide between 320 and 350 journeys per year for passengers in the parish, this averages as about 29 per month.

We continue to advertise in the local area and react to what the community needs. We are currently applying for grants for a hospital transport shuttle bus as we are finding that our voluntary car service is getting so busy, there are more journeys that we cannot accommodate.

We are incredibly grateful to the parish council for their continuous support they give to Green Community Travel, we have this year purchased a steam cleaner which really helps keep the buses clean, and gives them a more intense clean. Since we were awarded a grant at the end of 2022 and purchased new vehicles it is really important to keep these buses in good condition. For our passengers it is also important that they are clean and tidy so they have a pleasant journey.

Previously the council have supported us with advertising which remains a priority for us as there are still people that don't know about community transport, or if we can help them. We are here for anyone that cannot access public transport, this could be due to age mobility or not living near a bus stop to name a few reasons.

Advertising for volunteers is also really important, as other bus routes have been removed we are becoming busier for the voluntary car service, so more volunteers enables us to help more people. This remains a focus for us in 2025.

Our further afield trips have continued this year, we have had to increase the prices slightly, but they still remain incredible value for the destinations and remain door to door and fully accessible.

As ever our ears are open to suggestions, any difficulties people are having with transport, and we will always do what we can to help.

We'd like to sincerely thank the Parish Council for their continued support of GCT, sharing things on social media and the support with grants, we are truly grateful. Your help enables us to continue doing what we do.

4. Jean Butler – Manor Hall Trustees

I would firstly like to welcome everyone to the Manor Hall, a Grade 2 listed building which was built in 1868 as the original Victorian school in the village. The premises are owned by the Parish Council and leased to the "Manor Hall at Coalpit Heath" charity to be run as a village hall for the use of the community. This was first set up as a Trust in 2002 and then converted to a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) in 2017, and has benefited over the years from the support of many dedicated volunteer trustees. We're currently running with a committee of 7, but are always looking for more willing helpers who can share the load.

We're lucky enough to have a few other volunteers who help look after the grounds and the garden area, which is a lovely space open to the public during the day, although we do have to pay for some of the more demanding maintenance. We've also been very fortunate in our Hall Manager, whose dedication to her job is exemplary. Alison has been with us for 15 years and I can safely say that the ongoing success of the Hall is largely down to her efforts. She certainly keeps us on our toes when it comes to rules and regulations for listed buildings and health and safety!

We currently have a wide range of regular groups who use the Hall during the week and at weekends, ranging from fitness, yoga and pilates classes to karate, dance and a vegan supper club, plus of course the Outstanding Little Explorers pre-school. We've also become a very popular venue for children's parties and baby showers, filling in the weekend spaces. Our renovated Red Brick Annexe is well used for meetings, as well as for small groups and classes, who enjoy the self-contained facilities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Council for their ongoing support – their annual contribution towards the upkeep of the building helps allow us to allocate our income from the hire charges to more major projects like re-surfacing the car park. There's always work to do when maintaining a building of this age and keeping it up to scratch for our hirers! We always seem to have a list of outstanding repairs, and we're also working on improvements like updating the water supply to replace the old lead pipes. Redecoration is a constant, of course, and the specialist paint needed for the lime plaster on the walls is getting more expensive as the years go by.

5. Fraser Clark – Coalpit Heath Cricket Club

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support of our cricket club. Your assistance in providing access to the Westerleigh Playing Fields and Coalpit Heath grounds has been invaluable. The grounds crew's dedication to maintaining the square and preparing the wickets has ensured that our players have the best possible facilities to enjoy the sport.

As a parent of two children brought up in the village, both of whom have benefitted from your support, I am particularly grateful. We are lucky to have lots of volunteers who are all generous with their time and Cricket takes a lot of work to arrange (that's why the Americans invented

baseball!!), but like everything now adays costs are rising and maintaining beautiful places and showcasing English cricket on a summer day in our villages and those up and down the country needs the support of councils and sports charities to survive and thrive.

Thanks to your support, over 200 children have been actively involved in fixtures, ranging from the Under 11s, Under 13 Girls, Under 13s, and our Saturday 3rd team. The positive impact of cricket on their lives cannot be overstated. Not only does the sport promote physical activity and mental health benefits, but it also helps develop essential social skills, mathematical abilities, and the resilience to deal with disappointment.

Your commitment to our community and the development of our young athletes and those with a few seasons under the belt is truly appreciated. We look forward to continuing our partnership and achieving even greater success together.

In the coming seasons we are hoping to launch an all-stars program in the summer evenings at Westerleigh, and also add a ladies hardball team to the club to help attract new people to the game.

Please come and support the teams at Coalpit Heath and Westerleigh grounds, there is always a job to do if you want to get involved (learn a new skill scoring/umpiring/ground prep) or just relax in the sunshine and watch the kids/adults and enjoy the beautiful surroundings we are lucky enough to have in the parish.

Thank you once again for your support.

6. Mark Cardwell - South Gloucestershire Citizens Advice Bureau

We are pleased to share with you this report giving an insight into figures for the Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath parish in 2024-25.

We have seen an unprecedented increase in demand for our services across the whole of South Gloucestershire, particularly around cost of living issues. We have seen an increase of 23% in demand in the last 12 months alone as local people struggle to manage increases in basic household expenditure from food to fuel bills.

More people are making claims for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and Universal Credit (UC) to plug the financial hole within their finances by supplementing their income and we continue to support more households that have never used our services before.

Many households we're helping are in negative budgets with more going out each month on essentials than they have coming in. This has led directly to an increase in debt issues which we saw play out last year.

The year ahead continues to pose a challenge, with bills going up by an average of more than £30 per month for households across England and Wales as of 1st April.

We thank you for your continued support to enable us to assist residents of Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath and we're hugely grateful for the £2,000 donated by Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath Parish Council in 2024-25 towards our services in Yate.

WESTERLEIGH & COALPIT HEATH

In 2024-25, we provided advice to a total of 73 local residents and helped them to manage 354 separate issues. This is an increase of 21 per cent on 2023-24 when we helped 58 clients. We also secured £88,587 for local residents in 2024-25. Taking into account the £2,000 donated by the parish council, this is a significant return on investment and amounts to an average of £1,213 for each person we helped.

CLIENT PROFILE

- 54% of W&CH clients were female
- 56% reported having a disability or long term health condition which is much higher than the census data for South Glos as a whole at 24%
- 11% were from black and minority ethnic groups which is higher than the local census data for South Glos at 8%
- The majority of local residents we helped were of working age

Enquiry Areas

The 354 issues dealt with on behalf of W&CH residents covered a wide range of advice issues areas although the main source of enquiries were around Benefits & tax credits (30%). The other main issues local residents needed help with were Universal Credit (18%), utilities and communications (9% up from 4% the previous year), and debt (9%). 12% of all the local residents we helped needed charitable/foodbank support.

Benefits

22% of all benefit enquiries related to Personal Independent Payments (PIP), a benefit to help sick and disabled people. The application forms for this benefit are complex to complete with a high percentage refused in the first instance. Our success rate at overturning unfair PIP decisions are high, but we know that many people applying without our support often struggle to do this on their own.

Debt

Fuel debts are the most common debt issue (28% of all debt issues) followed by council tax arrears (19%).

Please note we will soon be [moving to larger offices in Station Road, Yate](#). This is needed due to rising demand for our services and also because our team has grown and our current office next to Yate Leisure Centre is now too small. We don't currently have a move date due to delays with fire safety work but hope to move in the next few months. Once we move, the Yate open-door sessions on Monday, Tuesday and Friday will take place from the new office along with appointments and other face-to-face activity. The new address is:

Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire, Unit 1 Badminton Court, Station Road, Yate BS37 5HZ (what.three.words: [jiffy.validated.flux](#)). Look for the building with a clock tower just to the east of Yate Railway Station on Station Road!

7. Paul's Place

Sophie Kinsman offered her apologies for the meeting. A short video about Paul's Place was played https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEDI6Pz2F_U and a written report was provided.

What we do

Paul's Place is a supportive, inclusive environment where disabled adults can connect with others, develop new skills, and access social, sports, and leisure activities to improve their quality of life.

Who we help

Our members are aged 18-65yrs. Currently, 38% are from South Gloucestershire, 33% from Bristol, 11% from North Somerset, and 3% from Gloucestershire. They come to us with diverse physical, cognitive and sensory disabilities from a vast range of conditions such as multiple sclerosis, spina bifida, ataxia, cerebral palsy, Huntington's disease, brain injury, stroke and life-changing injuries. Some have been socially isolated – sometimes for many years.

Our core service and your contribution

Our core service is a programme of daily activities, Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm. This includes art, baking, music therapy, animal interaction, and day trips to local attractions and events. The Parish Council's grant of £1,000 in May 2024 contributed to this programme for the four members who live in the parish.

At the day facility, you helped to fund Animals Interactive, Maths and Money Sense, a talk on the Art of the Magician, baking, and the Gardening Group. You also contributed to day trips bowling, to Castle Combe racetrack, England vs. France rugby, England vs. New Zealand rugby, Broadmead for shopping, Fishing and Art on Bitterwell Lake, Haynes Motor Museum, Wet Wheels Harbour Trip, Slimbridge Wetlands, Willow Trust accessible boat trips, pub lunches, and Nature Walks—the members have been busy! Thank you for your support.

We are co-designed and disability-led, ensuring members are actively involved in decision-making and that everything we do is based on their right to have choice and control. Our services deliver high impact and excellent value, with members at the heart of every decision.

Referrals

We are an independent charity, not a statutory service. However, local authorities or the NHS often refer people to us. Or new members or their families can contact us directly. Our Safeguarding Manager reviews all referrals to assess compatibility with our services and arranges a trial day, allowing the individual to experience our setting and ensure their needs can be met. Provided both parties agree to proceed, our Safeguarding Manager will conduct a full needs assessment, create a support plan, and assign a key worker. Personal goals are identified with the new member and reviewed quarterly.

Our next chapter

We are 30 this year! In August 2025, we will move to our own premises in Yate for the very first time. We have secured a long lease on the former Shire Way Community Centre and are currently transforming it into Paul's Place Hub, a vibrant, fully accessible centre for physically disabled adults and those with complex disabilities.

This is a huge refurbishment project which we are funding with grants and donations. The new Paul's Place Hub will significantly expand our capacity to support more people each year, while offering a broader and more varied programme of activities with dedicated rooms for different experiences. New features will include:

- Three Changing Places toilets

- Fully accessible kitchen
- Wider corridors and easy to navigate spaces
- Indoor archery facility
- Sensory room
- Gaming and movie room
- Gym
- Sports Hall
- Community café
- ...and more

Paul's Place Hub will allow us to support up to 60 members per day and expand our services to adults with learning difficulties and young people navigating the transition to adult services. This expansion will help us respond to growing demand and adapt to evolving needs.

This move also opens new doors for collaborations with other organisations that share our values, such as mental health charities, local sports groups, and community classes, helping to offer more inclusive activities and strengthen social cohesion. We will also make the Hub available to local groups and organisations for hire, ensuring it becomes a true community resource.

On behalf of everyone at Paul's Place, thank you for your support.

8. Ryan Elsbury and Daniel Meek – Swift Sports Coaching: Update on Children's Holiday Activity Days held in the parish

Thanks once again for engaging Swift Sports Coaching to deliver the Free Holiday Club provision for Westerleigh and Coalpit Heath Parish Council. 2024/25 was our fourth year and over those four years you have funded:

561 hours of Provision

2816 Funded Spaces

Over 285 Unique participants

In the last year we added a Christmas Party to our programme, with some additional funding from the Parish Council. This was great fun and really appreciated by parents and carers in the busy Christmas holiday.

We have been using the Mafeking hall for our events for a year now. This is a fantastic facility and the provision has improved hugely since we have had access to the building and surrounding fields. It has allowed us to offer more activities to the children.

For each event we collect data using our online booking system and provide this data to the parish, enabling you to measure the reach and impact of the events and your funding.

Easter Report - Statistics

Monday 7th April 2025, Tuesday 8th April 2025, Monday 14th April 2025, Wednesday 16th April 2025

- 128 spaces were on offer to children within the Parish
- 126 spaces were booked
- 110 attended
- Approximately 90% attendance rate

This is extremely good booking rate and attendance rate, especially as this is a small parish with only two primary schools.

Swift works in many of the local primary schools delivering PE lessons and after school clubs, so the children have got to know our staff and this probably helps with the high number of bookings, that and the fact the programme has been running for four years so is well known now.

Easter Report - Statistics – Schools

Manor 67.2%

Immanuel Christian 13.6%

Watermore 8.8%

Other 6.4%

Frampton Cotterell Primary 4%

Easter Report - Statistics – Gender

Girls – 42.1%

Boys – 57.9%

Four days – 6.3%

Three days -23.4%

Two days – 31.3%

One day – 39.1%

These figures show that the majority of children attend for just one of the days, so we are reaching a higher number of children overall than if everyone booked for all four days.

The full report can be read on our [website](#).

9. Cllr Rob McCullough – Update from Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath Parish Council

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

We are delighted to return to the Manor Hall this year for the annual parish meeting, a beautiful (and very hard-working!) building that sits at the heart of our community.

We have heard from the trustees about the work involved in caring for and managing this space for the community... a big thank you.

As I reflect on the past year, I will begin with an overview of Parish Council activities and then talk about some of the broader issues facing the parish. You will see a lot of the time it's the little things we do that can make a big difference.

The Parish Council is elected for a four-year term and May marks our halfway point. There are nine seats on the council and we currently have seven councillors. There are inevitable resignations and co-options during a council term and since the last meeting we have lost Cllr Hill but welcomed councillor David Margetts.

We are pleased to have maintained our number, but that means we still have two vacancies and we would really like to bring in new people to fill those spots. Anyone over the age of 18 who lives or works in the parish (or nearby) is eligible to become a councillor. I always stress that you don't need to be political, to have a particular affiliation, nor be put off by Westminster politics – this is a real chance to make local difference.

The time commitment is relatively small - around 5 hours per month to prepare for and attend a monthly meeting – but the role is absolutely vital to looking after and improving our local area. So if you, or someone you know, would like to help us represent our wide and varied piece of England, to add a new voice to discussions and to be a part of the small things, like overseeing our

- seven green spaces and two play areas,
- fishing lake,
- emergency plan, including a growing number of emergency defibrillators and bleed kits,
- two war memorials,
- and lots of litter bins and benches

PLUS help us to distribute significant grant funding to local organisations, then we would encourage them to please contact our Clerk to find out more or have a chat with any of us existing councillors – we're all very approachable. Spread the word!

At the end of May Sue, our Finance Officer and former Clerk, will be retiring. Sue joined the Parish initially as locum clerk in 2017 and then officially as Clerk, putting a great deal of energy, hard work and dedication into the role and the Council's operation at a time when much was needed. For those not familiar with the mechanics of a Parish Council the Clerk is the eyes, ears and brain – a behind the scenes CEO, who normally organises councillors, paperwork and meetings whilst keeping a steady ship legally and financially. We have, over the years, tackled many a thing – from fitting public access defibrillators across the parish, to delving through the former bait fridges at the old Bitterwell Lake chalet, to managing the replacement of the whole chalet and recruitment of a new Lake Manager, a changing council – from the councillors themselves to expanding our Council name to bring in the village of Coalpit Heath, to all the adaptations required to work through a global pandemic. All the while handled expertly, calmly with that trademark smile.

Even the prospect of taking a well-earned rest was met with a planned, considered process – we recruited Rachel as Deputy and most recently Sue has been our Responsible Finance Officer, continuing to keep a steady financial ship as Rachel moved into the Clerk helm. In turn next, as Sue leaves us, Rachel will be taking on the finance role – with an excellent handover that Rachel is very grateful for!

Sue – a huge thank you, from me, from all of us on the council, I am sure from former councillors too, from many of the organisations and other stakeholders we work alongside, and from the Parish. I don't think it's exaggerating to say that this council simply wouldn't be how it is today

without your careful stewardship. You will always be welcome to pop back in to see how we're getting on!

YEAR IN SUMMARY

As a council we have access to an annual community benefit payment of almost £20,000 from the Says Court Solar Farm. In the past few years we have also benefitted from substantial funds from developers. 2025/26 is the final year of developer funding from the Blackberry Park development. With the new Local Plan on the horizon and more development planned for the parish however, there is potential for more funding in the future. More on that later...

The Parish Council's role is to invest this funding in projects and grants that deliver benefits for our residents and the local area, whether that's a small amount for something like funding the Warm Space initiative in Westerleigh during winter, to larger ones like funding children's activity days and youth clubs. During 2024/25 we invested over £33,000 of external grant funding in this way. You have heard from a number of our grant recipients tonight. We are always keen to hear from organisations that we haven't worked with before, so please spread the word.

As well as to those groups, in the last year we have continued investing in our play areas, updating older equipment and adding new play experiences. We have installed a new wooden adventure trail at Westerleigh Playing Field to complement the new climbing tower added in the previous year. In the next couple of months we will turn our attention to the natural play area at Newman's Field. Watch this space.

Next door at Bitterwell Lake, things have been a little quieter after major investment in a new headwall and outflow in January 2024. Our Lake Manager has been impressed with how well the new structures coped with the intense rainfall we experienced during the autumn and winter just gone.

The lake continues to go from strength to strength under his stewardship. We were delighted when one of Bitterwell's own joined the England Under 15s at the world championships in Serbia last summer. And the team won! Huge congratulations to all involved.

More good news came this month when two young anglers from Bitterwell were selected for this year's England under 15s team. They will compete again in the world championships, this summer – this time in Spain. We look forward to watching the next generation of anglers progress at Bitterwell Lake.

Sport has been thriving elsewhere in the parish too and we are proud of the partnership we have built with the local teams that use Westerleigh Playing Field. The cricket pitch is now shared by Westerleigh Cricket Club and Coalpit Heath Cricket Clubs, the latter needing more capacity for their third team and youth team matches. You have heard from the chairman about the investment the club has made in improving the cricket square.

On the football front, the newly formed Westerleigh AFC played their first season, using the field for training sessions and home fixtures. And what a season it was - the team have just become Gloucestershire FA County Cup champions. Huge congratulations to all involved. We hope that they make the most of the grant we awarded for training and match balls next season!

The annual Westerleigh Fun Day will be back on the Playing Field on 12th July. As in previous years we have awarded a grant to cover the costs, with any profits this year going towards the church

organ.... We are promised a punch and judy show, food stalls and the ever-popular dog show. Look out for advertising nearer the time.

We are proud of our track record of investing grants in the parish's community buildings and this last year has been no exception. Our main focus has been adding emergency bleed kits to community venues (where possible) to complement our existing and additional defibrillators. To date we have installed seven bleed kits across the parish working in partnership with Avon & Somerset Police. Special thanks go to Sue for managing this project.

Although we often think of bleed kits in relation to knife wounds, these kits can be used to stem bleeding in many emergency first aid situations (after dialing 999). We urge our residents to look out for your nearest kit and remember its location, as you never know when it might be needed. There is a map on the front page of our website and in each of our noticeboards.

Once again this year, we have supported our popular free Holiday Activity Days delivered by Swift Sports. As you have heard these are being delivered at Mafeking Hall on Serridge Lane, which has proved to be a brilliant success.

We have also continued to part-fund the Frampton Cotterell Youth Service so that young people from our parish can attend youth club sessions the youth café, and benefit from outreach sessions. Last, but not least, we have awarded grants to organisations and charities that provide vital services to our parishioners.

These include –

- Paul's Place – enhancing life for physically disabled adults
- Great Western Air Ambulance Charity
- Bristol and Weston Hospitals Charity
- St Peters Hospice
- South Gloucestershire Citizens Advice Bureau
- And the Brightwell MS therapy Centre

Returning to reflect on the parish as a whole, we look forward now to the building of a new A432 overbridge, the old one having finally been demolished in March. This huge project is on track for completion in early 2026. For our residents this cannot come a moment too soon as the ripple effect of its closure and demolition is felt far and wide.

We are pleased that South Gloucestershire Highways has recently put forward recommendations to address the traffic impact through Westerleigh village. We must thank the dedicated community Speedwatch volunteers for their work and the pressure they have put on South Gloucestershire Council. We will continue to work with the ward councillors to press for the recommendations to be implemented as soon as possible.

We have also been assured that, once the new A432 bridge opens, major repairs will be made to Henfield Road including restoring the collapsing verges and road surface. As a Parish Council we will continue to represent residents of Henfield Road through the issues that crop up and press for these big improvements this time next year.

We are expecting work on two major active travel projects in the parish to start in the next few months, both being delivered by South Gloucestershire Council. This Parish Council has worked very hard to advocate for local residents who will be directly impacted.

As we are in the pre-election period for the WECA mayoral elections we cannot discuss these projects until after 1st May. We will share updates and information with residents at our meetings and on our Facebook page and website as soon as we can. Look out for more information.

Finally, we move ever closer to the adoption of a new Local Plan for South Gloucestershire. The regulation 19 consultation has recently closed and the next stage will be examination by the Government's Planning Inspectorate and hearings in Spring 2026.

The good news for this parish is that no development is proposed around Westerleigh village in this version of the Plan, and the land east of Roundways (with its 1800 houses put forward several years ago) is not included in the draft plan. The fight will continue to protect green belt and green space in the parish, and we wait to see the results of the next stage – when the government inspector works through the Local Plan.

A 90 home site next to Blackberry Park (off Park Lane), is included within the plan and an outline planning application has already been submitted.

The largest proposed change in this parish is the release of Green Belt Land north of the M4 and south of Westerleigh Road, to build what is being called the North Lyde ecotech village, between Henfield and Oakley Green. This will be a mixed-use development eventually comprising 2050 dwellings and 18ha of employment land. The site is split by the Parish boundary with Pucklechurch. The Parish Council has recently reiterated its commitment to continue to press for the protection of the surrounding Green Belt and measures to mitigate the impact on the neighbouring communities.

Plenty of change in the Parish's future then, and the Parish Council is in good health to take on the challenges as they come.

We represent over 3500 parishioners across our two main villages as well the western tip of Yate and the hamlets of Henfield, Mays Hill, Ram Hill, Kendleshire, Nibley and Oakleigh Green. Coalpit Heath has, according to the 2021 census, one of the oldest average age populations in the country but we have growth and new members of the community joining us in the likes of the thriving Blackberry Park development.

You have seen tonight a snapshot of the activity taking place in this small part of the world and the big impact it can make on us, our children, our elderly, the charities doing incredible work amongst us, the leisure and natural resources dotted across the parish bringing people together, the community groups offering a warm welcome when times are hard and the winter is bleak, or the Parish Council being able to provide and signpost lifesaving defibs across the area just in case they might ever be needed.

This parish works because of all of those small things, making it a community and a great place to live. This Parish Council may only make small changes in the grand scheme of things, but they can make big impacts. And we look forward to doing more in the next year.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions.

The meeting ended at 7.15pm.