

WESTERLEIGH & COALPIT HEATH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Monday April 11th 2022 at the Manor Hall, Coalpit Heath

Hosted by Councillor Bob Taylor of Westerleigh Parish Council

Councillor Bob Taylor (Westerleigh Parish Council) was proposed and unanimously elected as chairman of the meeting by those in attendance (as the Chairman and Vice Chairman were not in attendance). Cllr Taylor 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.

Apologies were received from, Cllr A Di Duca, Cllr Rob McCullough (Chairman) and Cllr Jon Lean (Vice Chairman), Sue Simmons (Parish Clerk), Avon Wildlife Trust, David Hardill - Yate Heritage Centre and Dean Ashpole-Chapman - Cotswold District Scout group.

The presenters were welcomed.

- 1. The minutes of the last Annual Parish meeting held on Monday 26th April 2021 were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting and duly signed.**
- 2. Ryan Elsbury & Nicolas Smith, Swift Sports Coaching – on Children's Holiday Activity days held in the Parish**

Ryan and Nick thanked WPC for its continued funding of Activity Days for children from the parish aged 4 – 16. Since April 2021, 22 events have been held with an average of 36 participants per event. 776 children have attended in total. The events are advertised at Manor Hall School (majority of attendees) and Immanuel School, but children who live in the parish and attend other schools also attend. Events are held at Westerleigh Playing Field/ Westerleigh Village Hall, but Swift is looking for an indoor venue which could be used in poor weather and to offer a different range of activities. Cllr A Hill suggested the Community hub building in Serridge Lane which is being managed by the Cotswold District Scouts, might be a suitable venue once completed. Future priorities include increasing the participation of girls and reviewing the maximum numbers per session with the Council to provide the best value (a reduction from 48 to 32 was suggested). A new online booking system has been introduced which is working well. The full report can be viewed at <https://www.westerleighparishcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Annual-Parish-Meeting-2022-Swift-Sports-Report.pdf>

3. Geraldine Jasper, Chair of Trustees, Manor Hall

Fortunately we have emerged from the pandemic, on all levels, in a fairly healthy state. This is due in no small part to the extra financial support afforded to us by the Parish Council's grants and we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for helping us through this very difficult period.

Our success at navigating the past 24 months is mostly due to having a hall manager who has worked tirelessly in keeping us up to speed with ever changing regulations, instigating strict protocols and ensuring all users were fully up to speed on their own individual responsibilities, all of which has resulted in keeping the hall as COVID safe as possible. Alison has kept up to date on COVID regulations supported by Dick Whittington of WERN and also ACRE. Their information has been invaluable and we are very grateful to them at all times, not only during a pandemic.

During the first 'Lockdown' our hall was empty and remained so for ten weeks. After this we were allowed to open for Pre-School and for support groups. Our support groups were Time for Carers and CA Anon (a group to help with drug and alcohol rehabilitation), these have remained with us. Since returning to the hall Pre-School has managed to remain open, mainly due to the business

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owner and Alison our hall manager working very closely together in keeping the setting safe. It has been very challenging with so many little ones coming to the hall every day.

Throughout the first year or so of the pandemic the Trustees held all meetings by Zoom. The Officers and Alison had a weekly Zoom meeting, full Zoom Management meetings were frequently held and communications via Zoom, email and telephone were excellent. This communication allowed us to continue with business safe in the knowledge that the hall manager was on site working on our behalf. The Trustees have now settled back into face to face meetings which has been a very welcome return to normality.

Once regulations allowed we gradually opened our facility to our previous users, some very eager to return with some more reticent. However, most have returned and we also have new users so the hall is once again lively and thriving. On a busy week, of which there are many, we could have up to 33 bookings! We have a variety of regular bookings including Gardening and Social, Paracise, Yoga, Pilates, Reiki, Karate, Street Dance, Ballet, Jazzy Jamboree, Robot Reg, Slimming World etc. We also have two church groups. We have a children's entertainer who holds Harry Potter events and even a Pop-Up Vegan Restaurant here once a month which looks fantastic. We also take private bookings for parties, meetings, weddings etc.

Our Community Garden has remained open and available to the local community throughout. It has been a peaceful and tranquil place of solace and accommodates many visitors. We rely heavily on volunteers to keep the garden a tidy and beautiful state. The lion's share of the work has been done by Mike and Pat Hooper who worked in the garden almost every day. Sadly they have just retired and their presence and commitment will be greatly missed. Alison also tends to the garden and has made personal donations of planters and plants, also working with Coalpit Heath WI and Floral Friends. Alison oversees all volunteers, including Dave Green, Mark Hill and Alan Matthews. There is also input from a couple of the Trustees. We are extremely grateful to all our volunteers and we would struggle without them. We continue to have regular costs to keep the lawn pristine.

The Trustees have not yet returned to a full social calendar although we did hold one celebration in September 2021 to celebrate the refurbishment of the Bell Tower. We received a substantial anonymous private donation specifically for the Bell Tower which was fantastic. We had a really lovely afternoon ringing the bell for the first time in many years. We were blessed with lovely weather so we were able to stay outside, guests were by invitation only. Our first event of 2022 will be a Platinum Jubilee Cream Tea on Thursday 2nd June. Tickets will be available at £5 per person. We are planning a musical evening in October, details yet to be finalised. We also have a planned return to our Christmas Cracker event on Sunday 4th December.

We have completed a substantial amount of maintenance work, some of which is funded by the Parish Council contribution. This funding is available for 'fabric of the building' work only, and covered additional works to the Bell Tower, drainpipe, roof, gate, fencing and window repairs, substantial work to the Grey Stone Outbuilding, replacement of drain covers etc. Being a Listed Building all works are expensive or should I say more expensive than for a 'normal' building. Apart from day to day expenditure we have also installed Hearing Loops to our Jubilee and Newman rooms, substantially increased our paid cleaning regime, undertaken major and expensive tree pruning. We have also had our heating system power flushed to make it more efficient, installed acoustic curtains etc, the list is endless. Our Maintenance and Project work is under constant scrutiny and we have a formal Business Plan with a specific sub-committee to ensure we set targets and budgets therefore keeping the building in the best possible condition. Day to day repairs, decoration etc is overseen by Alison who identifies and manages all required remedial work.

In recent summers we have planned hall maintenance closure for one week. Bigger works are scheduled during this time to minimise disruption to our users. We decided not to close in summer

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2021 as our users had already suffered so much and most were really struggling with class/ group numbers. They still do have fluctuating attendance and sadly some groups are struggling financially.

We are a team of eight Trustees with one employee, Alison. We take our roles very seriously and try to be as professional as possible. We are looking for additional Trustees to be co-opted on to our Management Team. If you, or anyone you know, is interested in joining us please let me know.

Thank you again to the Parish Council for your continuing and most valuable support. Without it we would not be able to provide the level of service to the local community that we do currently.

4. Robert Cole, Trustee for Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire

Robert gave an overview of the service provided by Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire and the types of issues that they support people with. Face to face services restarted in August 2021 at various locations (the nearest to the parish being in Yate). CA South Gloucestershire are the only citizens advice to have resumed a face to face service, as well as telephone and online. Funding is received from South Gloucestershire Council and the Parish Council, but unfortunately funding from SGC has reduced by 35% from April 2022, which has meant the closure of two branch services in Staple Hill and Cadbury Heath.

Looking ahead, CA South Gloucestershire would like to deliver debt and budget management courses in the area as a form of 'pre-emptive' advice, to prevent people from getting into serious debt in the first place. The full report can be viewed at

<https://www.westerleighparishcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Annual-Parish-Meeting-2022-CA-South-Gloe-Report.pdf>

5. Cllr Bob Taylor , Westerleigh Parish Council - update from the Parish Council

Your Parish Council can consist of nine volunteer Parish Cllrs and until recently we only had six. In September last year Kate Kelliher joined the team and just last month Adam Hill joined the team – both live in Coalpit Heath and are keen to get involved with local projects and community enhancements and issues. Rachel Davis joined the Council as Deputy Clerk in January.

Being a Cllr is very rewarding and we now have just one vacancy if anyone else would like to get involved. You can always have a chat with myself or the Clerk Sue if you'd like to find out what is involved.

GOOD NEWS - We have finally had permission from Democratic Services to change our name – so from next year's elections we will officially be known as Westerleigh AND Coalpit Heath Parish Council – a much better reflection of all the residents we have always covered. You may start to see us using that new name as we move forward.

MORE GOOD NEWS - We have been fortunate in the last couple of years, and indeed for next year too, that we have received substantial sums from developer contributions – mainly from the development at Blackberry Park in the form of Section 106 funds that enable us to help community projects and give grants to local organisations. We also get almost £20,000 a year from the Solar Farm agreement which started at Says Court Farm in 2014.

The biggest grant we have made this year is around £21,000 towards the new Community hub building in Serridge Lane which is being managed by the Cotswold District Scouts, but it is important to note this isn't just a new Scout building it is a new HUB that many groups will be able to use, or residents be able to hire. That is why we felt it deserved some of our Community Benefit funds.

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Other grants have been made for the charity supporting the Children's hospital and St Peters Hospice, and on a really local level we gave grants to the Miners Club for new entrance doors, Yate Heritage Centre for activity day materials, Westerleigh Bloomers for Jubilee floral displays, and Westerleigh Neighbourhood Watch to continue their village newsletter.

We have also continued to fund Avon Wildlife Trust activities from the benefit we get from the Says Court Solar Farm.

OUR OWN PROJECTS

We have also carried out many projects ourselves – three defibrillators have been based around the Parish and free CPR training sessions have taken place; Swift run Children's school holiday activity days as you've heard; and we have continued to add and upgrade our benches, bins and signage.

At Bitterwell Lake we have replaced eight fishing platforms and installed a further large disabled access platform. We were delighted to secure funding to cover the cost of these platforms from the British Disabled Angling Association.

We have started a Local Nature Action Plan and we are holding a free event on the afternoon of 19th April at Westerleigh Village Hall where you can come and see our ideas and tell us yours.

We have planted 240 wildlife friendly hedging plants at Newman Field and as part of the Platinum Jubilee trees have been planted at Kendleshire, Westerleigh Playing Field, Manor School and Immanuel school.

There are lots of smaller projects – too many to mention but if you see something you think we could help with let us know.

Also for the Platinum Jubilee we have provided a commemorative mug for every child at Manor School and Immanuel School and they will be given out over the next few weeks.

I can't stress enough that local organisations should come and talk to us if they have a project that benefits the community and let us know what help they need. We will consider all kinds of projects as shown on the Grants page of our website.

CONSULTATIONS

Finally I just want to talk about CONSULTATIONS that South Gloucestershire Council hold.

Many are of little or no interest to the majority of people, but every once in a while there are those that greatly affect this community. One such consultation open at the moment is the way in which Badminton Road is going to evolve in order to improve transport for Yate and Bristol residents. This Parish Council is concerned that the people at the heart of this – i.e. those who live on or near Badminton Road are being ignored or their needs sidelined. Please take the time to read about this consultation. The details are on our agenda, on our Facebook page and on our website. We will be discussing it at the meeting after this one. The more people that get involved the more hope there is that you'll be listened to

Once again thank you for coming and we hope to hear more from you all in the coming year.

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6. Shaun Egan, Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA), addressed the meeting.

Shaun explained that SARA provides lifeboat cover for the River Severn from Newport to Wyre Forest, as well as assistance during flooding (rescue and deliveries) and support to the Police and Fire Service. SARA volunteers also provide assistance during extreme weather, for example helping medical staff to get to work. SARA is run entirely by volunteers (180) and there are no paid staff. It receives no government funding and the organisation costs around £200,000 per annum to operate. The Parish Council has previously provided grant funding.

Cllr Steve Reade suggested that SARA apply for South Gloucestershire Council Member Awarded/ Area Wide Funding.

7. Avon Wildlife Trust – written report.

Avon Wildlife Trust sent a written report and the Deputy Clerk read out the highlights. The full report is below.

Avon Wildlife Trust have been supporting Nature's Recovery in Westerleigh and Coalpit Heath for many years now through our programme of Education and Community Engagement Events, inspiring and resourcing people to take action for wildlife. The science that we are currently being encouraged and inspired by in our work at AWT as part of our new Team Wilder campaign, shows that if just one person in every four takes this action for wildlife, then it can be enough to change the minds and behaviour of the majority, which will help to put nature in recovery. We want to support people to reconnect with nature, offer them opportunities to learn, empower them to take action at home and in their wider community, and in turn be part of the movement that is gathering together collectively with others doing the same to make this change. AWT's work currently benefits the residents of the Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath area through taking this approach across our variety of engaging community events of which a summary of the most recent, are outlined below.

What a couple of year's of delivery this has been! What started off as our second year of the current three year delivery schedule not only ran over in to 2021 but has continued through to the start of 2022, merging both of our anticipated 2020/21 and 2021/22 delivery in to one project. In 2020 we managed to deliver an Owl Prowl and Bat walk in October with Dave Knowles from Owl Occasions who co-led the session with us. We welcomed nine people, including four children who seemed to really enjoy the day – despite the weather!

Our Says Court volunteer placement, Chloe Raynor, finished her voluntary role in March 2021. Even though the placement didn't go as planned due to COVID-19, Chloe enjoyed her time with us and considered the experience gained useful to secure a new job. Then followed a few further Spring cancellations until in May 2021, when we emerged from our most recent lockdown, we welcomed a group of 12 Beavers from the 1st Frampton Cotterell Scout Group.

Nicole Daw our People and Wildlife Officer left, followed shortly by Irene our People and Wildlife Manager heading off on Maternity Leave, transitioning to Emily Chiswell and George Cook joining the team as Manager and Officer respectively.

In 2021 once we emerged from the effects of the pandemic, we ran an Owl Prowl and Beginners Bird Watch event at Says Court Solar Farm which welcomed 25 and 12 people respectively. Whilst exploring the farm on these events, we saw a little owl sheltering in its box and even spotted a Yellowhammer. We then kicked off this year's programme with a Bird Watch Assembly at Immanuel School for 50 of their children which sat alongside a linked community event for the national Big

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Garden Bird watch the following weekend where we were joined by a group of 9. A Wildlife Photography Talk led by George at Henfield Village Hall was attended by 18 people and received some great feedback. Events over half term included Nest box Building at Henfield Hall and a Half Term Family Fun Day at Bitterwell Lake, both of which were sold out with attendance of 12 and 40 respectively. Our last event of this year was an Owl Prowl, where we welcome 14 local attendees who dissected owl pellets as well as enjoyed meeting Loki the Barn the Owl from the South Gloucestershire Owl & Bird of Prey Conservation Trust.

As a result of these extremely unusual times, our initial proposal which offered six community engagement sessions has expanded along with the delivery time that it has been stretched over, to have offered ten events in total to date. We hope you'll agree that despite the few transitional bumps in the road, they are back up and running with more creativity and activity than ever! We are currently in discussion with Westerleigh Parish Council about how we can continue our work together over the coming year and look forward to sharing the outcome of how that will look.

8. Westerleigh United Charities – written report.

Westerleigh United Charities sent a written report which the Deputy Clerk read out.

The Trustees of Westerleigh United Charities administer funds which have been bequeathed to the Parish by a number of benefactors since the seventeenth century.

They make an annual distribution from the funds for those people in the Parish, usually elderly, who are needy and for whom a little extra helps.

Westerleigh United Charities may also make small grants to deserving young people under the age of 21, who live in the parish of Westerleigh and who are entering into apprenticeships or training, to assist with the purchase of books, tools or equipment.

If you live in the Parish of Westerleigh and have done so for a minimum period of 3 years and would like to apply for a distribution or a grant, you can obtain an application form can be obtained by emailing westerleighunitedcharities@outlook.com

Details are also available at www.westerleighparishcouncil.org.uk/westerleigh-united-charities/

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions.

The meeting ended just before 8pm.

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