

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON 24th MAY 2017 AT 8.00PM IN THE CHURCH ROOM, WEST WYCOMBE**

PRESENT:

Cllrs Mrs. V. Smith (Chairman), Mr. N. Harris, Mr. N Timberlake Mr. S. Cope
Dist Cllr Mr. I McEnnis Mrs. S. Henson, Clerk

6 members of the public

APOLOGIES: Cllrs Mrs. K. Cheshire, Mr. P. Brown, Mr. R. Seymour, County Cllr Mr. D. Hayday,
Dist Cllr Mrs. Teesdale, Thames Valley Police

The Chairman, Cllr Mrs. Smith welcomed everyone.

Cllr Mrs Vicki Smith, West Wycombe Parish Council Chairman's Report for 2017/2018

We Parish Councillors and Sharon our Clerk constantly challenge ourselves to try to preserve all that is good about our parish and it's community whilst keeping up with the fast pace of change. Sometimes we do have to pause and reflect on what we do as Parish Councillors, are we making the right decisions for all our residents and how many will benefit from our decisions?

We have kept a close eye on the changes that could happen in the tiers of councils above us in Bucks.

This last year we have faced not knowing if the County Council and District Councils would be disbanded and replaced with one unitary authority and as I write this we still do not know.

We know the previous Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and local Government, Sajid Javid MP was minded to have one unitary authority in Bucks. We have a new Sec of State for these affairs now, MP The Hon James Brokenshire and he will have to make the decision. He can of course decide to leave things as they are now.

The District Councils have sent their objections to this "minded" decision to The Sec of State and put in a bid for the County Council to be disbanded and for there to be two unitary councils in Bucks, Aylesbury Vale in the north of the county and Wycombe DC, Chiltern DC and South Bucks DC would join up to form a unitary in the south of the county.

Everyone has been encouraged to send his or her preference to the Sec of State by the 25th May 2018.

I think it will be sometime before we hear the eventual decision and I am pretty sure whichever way it goes it will not suit everyone.

Whatever happens we will rise to the challenge.

We will always make sure our residents get the best possible representation to whatever council we have. We might be small compared to other councils but we have always made our presence felt and we are respected.

BCC devolved grass verge cutting down to us in the 30mhp areas in our parish a few years ago plus sign cleaning and some weed killing on our roads. We do more grass cuts than they did which helps to keep our parish neat and tidy.

We have had to call on Transport for Bucks a few times this year to clear drain and gullies in the High Street after some exceptional storms this year.

We have paid to have gullies cleared on Church Lane coming down from the top of West Wycombe Hill and Toweridge Lane to help alleviate the flooding problems.

We have agreed to pay half of the cost for BCC to carry out a consultation on the traffic calming issue in Chorley Road. We do not know when the findings of the consultation will be ready. These things can take years to come through. 4 years in the case of the double yellow lines in Church Lane!

Of course, even if the report is positive we may not be able to afford the traffic calming measures they suggest without funding from BCC and anyone else we can think of. We would have to pay at least 50% of the estimated cost.

Thames Valley Police have staged speed traps on our roads but recently only for short periods of time because they realised that people were signalling and texting other road users that the Police were there.

We have also been in touch with TVP about drug dealing and drug taking in areas of our Parish and the vandalism on the play equipment in the Playground at the Pedestal.

It was very disappointing to see the damage to the basket swings, the gate, the table and other areas.

We have asked Network Rail many times to cut back the embankment backing on to the Playing Field but as yet had no reply.

Talking of the Playing Field we did have a lot of worry when the travellers came on to it last summer and quite a bill for clearing it up and installing new locks. We were immensely grateful for West Wycombe Estate's help and support with all of this.

The allotments attracted a lot of dumped wood this last year and we were fortunate that some of the allotment holders did a great job of getting "rid" of it.

We have dealt with many planning applications this year, not all decisions have gone the way we would have liked. We are only consultees, Wycombe DC are the planning authority. One particular company in our Parish has put in over 20 planning applications in the last few years!

We donated a kissing gate for the field below St Paul's Church because the previous one was in a bad state of repair and many people walk their dogs and children there when the sheep are not in the field.

We also provide dog poo bins throughout the parish, which we pay £900 a year to have emptied.

In February we welcomed Mrs. Christine Walker to our meeting to thank her for being West Wycombe's School Crossing Patroller for the last 40 years and presented her with a gift and a bouquet, I believe she has been to a Queen's Garden Party recently so she has had an exciting year.

Cllr Simon Cope organised our litter pick again this year. It was a dreadful day on March 17th when it was held, it was snowy, wet and freezing cold but our residents are a hardy bunch and they turned out to collect litter from all over the Parish. They returned to the Village Hall to warm up and collect their reward of a hot cup tea or coffee and nourishing cake and a chat about what they had come across. Thankfully there was no suspicious looking grave like last year!

Our County Councillor Darren Hayday could not do the litter pick on the 17th but did go out litter picking for us the next day.

We continue to attend HS2 meetings as we are now at the stage of costing out the safety measures we want installed by Bucks CC but funded by HS2. We do have an assurance that the A40 from the M40 Stokenchurch to the Pedestal roundabout and back will not be used for construction traffic unless there are extenuating circumstances. We have asked for police help to manage the traffic if this does occur. Unfortunately we haven't managed to get the same assurance for the A4010 hence our efforts to secure funding for safety measures on the construction lorry route

Our thanks to Darren for coming to our meetings and working with us to get road maintenance organised and the consultation in Chorley Road in the pipeline.

Our thanks too to our Wycombe District Councillors, Cllr Mrs. Jean Teesdale and Cllr Mr. Ian McEnnis for their support and help over the last year.

Mike Henson looks after our website and twitter account, these contain lots of information and we thank Mike for all the work he puts into them.

Mrs. Sharon Henson is our invaluable Parish Clerk and Financial Officer. Without the information she gives us Parish Councillors before meetings it would take forever to make decisions. She negotiates with our contractors, works on our budgets and accounts. She has been known to herd cows back into a field off the A40 too; there is no end to her talents! She had to get up very early one morning last year when she had a phone call to say there was a body under the table tennis table in the playing field, it turned out to be a sleeping tramp, so she left him to sleep.

This Parish Council works very hard to achieve everything we do and we, the Councillors who are not paid, do what we do because we love our Parish and want it to be a good place for our residents to live. They and our Clerk all deserve your thanks. I would like to thank them too for their help and support.

Sharon Henson, Responsible Financial officer, Presentation of the Financial Statement

The Clerk/RFO issued a set of accounts to everyone present and gave attendees the opportunity to ask questions. We have spent the last twelve months trying to reduce our costs. We have re-negotiated the phone and lighting energy bills as well as taking the decision to cease our contract with the street lighting maintenance contractors – a decision which has proved to be the right one. We have built up our reserves for replacing some of the lighting in the parish with LED lights. The Parish Council pay for the energy and installed the lighting in Chorley Road, Bradenham Road and some of the heritage lights in Church Lane and Chorley Road and this year we will start the process of negotiating with suppliers to swap to LED lighting – probably starting with Bradenham Road. We had started to build up a reserve for the play equipment, however with the traveller incursion last summer and vandalism since; we have had to use some of this money. This is the last year of the Bucks County Council devolved services agreement and funding. At the moment we do not know what will happen in the future except that we think it will involve extra work and costs for the parish council. We finish the year with £29,170.61 in the bank as our reserve. The accounts can be viewed on our website www.westwycombe.org.uk

Cllr Neil Harris, Head Ranger National Trust

Report of the National Trust- Village, Hill and Park.

Work continues with the regular maintenance of properties in the village and the Park. Vacant properties are improved where possible and where funds allow, for example the Old Vicarage had improved ventilation fitted and secondary glazing, as well as internal and external redecoration. A detailed refurbishment specification is being drawn up for no 20 and Steps House requires some internal works before it can be re-let.

We continued our programme of scrub management on the hill, using volunteers and contractors to clear areas and maintain a mosaic of scrub habitats, ideal for wildlife. The normal routine of litter picking, path clearance and maintenance of signs and gates still taking place by NT staff and volunteers. A big thankyou to our volunteer litter pickers who help us keep the hill looking good!

Phase one and two of our tree work adjacent to the village has seen major tree works to the yews, this will keep a dense screen from the park but allow more light into village gardens. Tree survey work continues and a programme of tree surgery is currently being costed up, as we do most years.

The cascade in the park has seen major works to reinforce the banks, to prevent flooding downstream and protect the Grade one listed cascade in the event of an inundation. 6m steel and concrete piles were drilled into the chalk to prevent the banks being washed away. Most of the work is well hidden now! With a new fence and re-landscaping.

Events in the park and village will be part of the events team report.

Miss Christine Barry, Chairman of the Trustees of West Wycombe Community Library and Treasurer, West Wycombe Cricket Club

2017 saw the 10th Anniversary of the Community Library.

We celebrated by holding a fun day in Swan Yard with games for children, stalls food and drink. The Swan and the Butchers opened to provide lunches and a BBQ and the Library provided hot drinks, cakes and cream teas. The day was a big success and was well received by the villagers and visitors so we are hoping to repeat it again this year.

The Library is being well used by a number of groups, namely – The Crochet Ladies on a Monday, the Craft Group on a Tuesday and the West Wycombe Hens once a month. Their contributions are gratefully received.

We also have some very nice gifts for sale in the Library, Jewellery, Greeting Cards, Knitted goods, secondhand books and much more. All proceeds go to the Library and everyone is welcome just to come in and browse, enjoy a coffee and cake and sit in the courtyard on sunny days or by the fire when it's cold.

Our Volunteers have successfully integrated the new Library computer system, updated this year by Bucks County Council and are now fully trained in all the new applications.

We have also been able to reduce some of our utility payments, resulting in a large rebate and reduced monthly payments, which all help to keep our bank balance afloat.

As well as the £5, 000 we are obliged by the Charities Commission to hold as an operating balance, we have at present £1855.35 in our current account. The funds have recently been increased by the donation of £250 from the Bledlow Ridge Bonfire committee

I would like to thank our Volunteers who carry on year after year to keep the Library going, without whom we couldn't survive. As usual, we are having trouble recruiting more volunteers, especially to help with the Summer Sunday opening to serve refreshments. This has resulted in a reduction in our income.

We are very proud to have succeeded in keeping the Library, a very valuable local resource, open for 10 years and hope to continue, with support from our Community, for many more years.

Three years ago West Wycombe Cricket Club entered into a partnership with High Wycombe Cricket Club which has proved beneficial to both parties. The Cricket Meadow is now used every day by one or other of the clubs. This partnership has meant that West Wycombe no longer have to worry about the grounds maintenance as this is now undertaken by High Wycombe CC. West Wycombe has signed up to the All Stars Scheme which encourages children from 8 -11 to take up cricket. This is run on each Tuesday evening before senior's cricket practice. Currently they are attracting children from a wide area – as far out as Turville. The club raises funds by running two quiz evenings per year and running a 6 a side cricket festival on the same day as the Summer Fayre. They support the local community by allowing the school and the preschool to hold their annual sports days on the cricket meadow.

Mrs. Vicki Smith, Chairman, West Wycombe Community Association

The West Wycombe Community Association Committee are Trustees of West Wycombe Village Hall and we manage the Hall on a daily basis.

West Wycombe Play School who eventually became West Wycombe Pre School hired the Hall Monday to Friday in term time for over 30 years.

At the end of the summer in 2017 they gave notice that they had acquired new premises and planned to move out of the Hall in the October half term, which they did.

This was obviously a shock for the Village Hall Committee as it was a huge drop in income for the Hall. It is proving difficult to fill whole mornings five days a week.

Mrs Judith Gerrard our Letting Sec. has done her best to let as many of the vacant hours as possible but our takings will be very much less this year because of not having a regular income for those lost hours.

Luckily over the last few years we have had a lot of maintenance done in the Hall so overall it is in a good condition and hopefully will not need any major jobs done in the foreseeable future. Replacing the windows with double glazed units will always be on our agenda for the foreseeable future.

We still have our regular evening hirers, Art Club on a Monday, Masque Players on Tuesday and Thursday, Cycling Club on Wednesday and a Dancing Club on Fridays. It is a popular venue for parties, quizzes, coffee mornings and antique fairs and fairs selling homemade goods.

There was a break-in the summer and the police were notified. Nothing appeared to have been taken but with a broken window and damage to most of the locked doors in the Hall that the burglar forced open, there were repairs to pay for. We were advised not to make a claim on our insurance policy as our claim would mean our premiums could go up more than the claim. We were grateful that Derek, our decorator, came in on the Sunday the break-in was found to make the Hall secure.

Nothing to do with the break in but there seems to be short of cups again, a good few must have been broken this year, however, we do seem to have retained most the last lot of cutlery that we bought and we have bought over 80 new mugs this year.

The car park is still a cause of frustration with people parking there without permission. None of us can be there to monitor it day and night but Judith Gerrard and Graham Wood do note car numbers that are serial offenders although the vehicle owners are often quite unpleasant when asked to remove their cars from our private car park. No one seems to understand that we have to make sure there is enough room for people to park when the Hall is in use.

Michele our cleaner moved on this year but her Mother, Sue, now cleans for us. It is a thankless task cleaning a village hall because no sooner do you make the hall nice and clean someone comes in and messes it up! Sue fortunately understands this and does a good job of keeping the Hall as clean as she can in the time available to her.

We have a website that Louise Brown has made more interesting with clearer information and it is noticeable that we have picked up lettings because of this.

Judith Gerrard does a marvellous job as our Letting Secretary we are very lucky to have her. There is even more work for her now that there are inquiries for short daytime hires. Graham Wood our Honorary Treasurer, who has been doing the job for over 21 years, is invaluable, as is our Honorary Secretary, Mrs Marion Brown. It would be impossible for us to function without them.

We had a tea and cake stall at West Wycombe Summer Fayre again in 2017 with committee members and their friends raising £700 for the Hall. The increasing overheads of the marquee and pitch at the Fayre will mean that it will not be viable for us to do this again. We will look at other ways to fund raise for the Hall.

I would like to thank all the Village Hall Committee for their commitment and support of the Hall. The Committee are all volunteers and West Wycombe Village Hall would not run successfully without the time they put in to keep the Hall a viable, safe, clean, welcoming venue for all that use it.

Dr. Revd. Allan Barton, West Wycombe PCC report

I'm giving this report, having been the Rector of West Wycombe with Bledlow Ridge, Bradenham and Radnage for just ten months. This has been a very difficult year for the church in West

Wycombe in many respects, as we have been dealing with some major and ongoing challenges and these have taken a lot of time and physical and emotional energy. For five years now the church has been working steadily towards the construction of a children's room extension at St Lawrence's, an extra space that is desperately needed within the building, if we are to develop our work with young people. In my very first week as Rector, the foundations for this extension were finally dug. Unfortunately the 'architect' employed by the church council to oversee this work and act as contractor, a young man who had grown up in this village, proved not to have the qualifications, nor the requisite experience to undertake this sort of work on a grade I listed building. The Archdeacon and the diocese of Oxford intervened and they rescinded all the permissions that had been granted for this construction work, the first time in living memory that such action has had to be taken in the diocese. This action was not taken lightly, but was done to safeguard St Lawrence's, which is a building of national importance, but primarily to safeguard the church community. The 'architect' had underestimated by a factor of 300%, the cost of the construction of this room and had the work continued, the church would have been walking headlong into a financial and legal position that would have been difficult to return from. A lot of time and effort had been invested by the church community in the plans for the children's room and the fundraising. It has been really difficult for the congregation and church council to have to accept that we have to return to the drawing board and that an extension project is now some way off.

That brings me on to the second set of challenges. The ecclesiastical parish of West Wycombe is really very unusual in having three buildings to maintain, St Lawrence's, St Paul's and the historic Church Loft. It's a great responsibility for a single congregation. Despite the church community working tremendously hard in fundraising, the financial position of the church has been very much 'hand to mouth' for the past twenty years. Consequently there has been little spare money to invest in the fabric of the buildings. There are now some serious fabric issues to tackle at St Lawrence's. The church tower, which is such an important tourist attraction in the village and a source of income for the church, is currently unsafe and has had to be closed to the general public until repairs can be undertaken. The closure of the church tower will have a major impact on the church's finances this year, but people's safety must come first. The Church Loft has now been cleared of accumulated clutter, was open to the public at Christmas and we are currently exploring a future use for it. We are most probably facing a major renovation project here too, in what is a significant medieval building and any solution we come up with will require the provision of modern facilities.

Dealing with these issues is going to be an enormous challenge both in terms of manpower and finance, but they are not insurmountable. We have just appointed a new church architect Nick Cox, who is one of the foremost conservation architects in the country, and things are moving forward, the first step being a complete condition survey of the three buildings this summer. It is quite likely that a lot of the energy of the church for the next five years will be focused on building projects and on grant applications, to ensure that these iconic buildings can continue to serve and inspire the church and the people of West Wycombe for generations to come. My experience tells me that these challenges are often a blessing in disguise and an opportunity to engage with the local and the wider community.

Amidst all the fabric challenges which do need to be urgently resolved if the church is to continue to thrive, the week by week life of the church continues. The church in West Wycombe is part of a benefice of four parishes with Bledlow Ridge, Bradenham and Radnage and part of my task as Rector with an equal role and responsibility in each church community, is to explore ways the four churches might work more closely together. Here in West Wycombe there is a service in St Lawrence's or St Paul's every Sunday, sometimes twice or even three times. On three Sundays there is a Eucharist in St Lawrence and once a month a worship group leads a family service in St Paul's. This summer we have introduced a weekly afternoon service in St Lawrence's, when the church is open to visitors for tea and cake. A committed band of people under the direction of Alison Rimmer our churchwarden, keep the church open and welcoming to visitors on Sunday afternoons and bank holidays. An important element of the church's ministry and outreach in West Wycombe is to tourists and visitors we will be thinking about how we can develop that ministry further in the coming years. St Lawrence's is busy with concerts during the course of the year and there is rarely a quiet weekend on West Wycombe hill. The church has a lively round of

social events throughout the year that bring people together. We have a good and developing relationship with the village school here and the preschool and we are always delighted to welcome them to church for their Christmas concerts and other events and on occasion classes come up to St Lawrence's to learn about the building and the Christian faith. We continue to baptise, marry and bury people, although it's been a somewhat quiet year for all of these rites of passage. With the rest of the benefice, we are beginning to think about how we might pool our talents and resources and think of new ways of reengaging the church with the young. There are some daunting and complex challenges ahead for the church in West Wycombe, but lots of exciting opportunities too and we are looking forward with confidence to all that the next year will bring.

Alison Rimmer, Church Warden, West Wycombe PCC

Alison added to Dr. Revd. Barton's report by saying how much the church liked to be involved in the activities organized by the different organisations within the parish. Supplying hot drinks and cake as well as the use of the toilets when a Beacon is organized all contribute to the outreach of the church. The social events organized by the church e.g. the coffee mornings, the quizzes and the forthcoming WW1 Centenary Village Dance are for everyone to enjoy and socialize. The very necessary work required at St Lawrence Church will present us all with a challenge but we are all being very positive and look forward to maintaining our church for the generations to come. The finance provided by Cllr Ian McEnnis and the Parish Council for the Village Clock sited on The Church Room is greatly appreciated. The Clock is part of the village and a very rare specimen. Servicing and maintenance are costly and with three buildings which have to maintain any help towards the upkeep of the clock is really appreciated. Personally she feels privileged to be Church Warden and be active in the community of West Wycombe.

Andy Stafford, Chairman, Downley Dynamos

Andy gave his report to the previous Parish Council meeting. The Club has over 300 children playing football and operates from Mannings Field in Downley and the Pedestal Playing Field. Two age groups use the Pedestal Field which, because of their age, has meant an increase in parent's cars. They are aware that there have been issues over cars blocking the pavement and they intend to work on the furthest end of the car park, which floods and becomes boggy very easily, in an attempt to create more parking spaces. They will pay for all this as the parish does not need this extra parking space. As the area is very rural they will not be extending the area with a hard surface but installing drainage and tiles which the grass can grow through. They have installed a defibrillator on the pavilion and this is connected to the emergency services. They will continue to investigate the possibility of moving the large goal post to another area for a while to give the grass a chance to regenerate in the current goal mouth. This area is very heavily used on a daily basis by casual visitors to the play area. The club is in a very healthy financial position and may be in a position to make a donation to the Parish Council on top of the annual rent.

Mr. Neil Harris, Chairman, West Wycombe Events Team

The summer fayre was very well attended, with over 4500 people enjoying the fantastic weather. A great turn out of classic cars, coupled with many stall holders and activities for all the family gave the day a great atmosphere. The cricket match, a wide variety of food and the craft tent all proved a great draw. The vintage tractor rides were a popular and great way for people to see the park and visit the polo field.

The pre fayre fundraising quiz raised some of the money required to put the Fayre on. We always welcome volunteers to help set up and run the event, it is a very intensive period of set up and take down for the Events team and the NT staff and volunteers involved.

We held a midsummer beacon in June on the hill; good weather and a great turnout all led to a successful event, enjoyed by a wide cross section of the community. It is always good to be able to work with the Church at that event; they provided teas, coffee and cake, as well as vital loos! Early December brought the Festive Fayre, the weeks of preparation and set up all paid off, with another successful evening. The village was packed with people, enjoying the food, fairground rides and many stalls, scattered throughout the village.

Santa read to families in the grotto, staffed by our brilliant elves and his reindeer made an appearance at the village hall! A popular attraction! All the shops and pubs were open and were popular. The Church Loft had had a spruce up and was keenly sought out!

The New Year's Day walk was well attended, despite the weather! A muddy walk was rewarded with cake aplenty at the end! Always welcome after the hills!

A Beacon is planned for November 11th as part of the official commemoration of the end of World War 1.

Cllr Ian McEnnis, District Councillor, Chiltern Rise Ward

Cllr McEnnis reported on the current status of the proposed unitary changes. Wycombe District Council was joined by South Bucks DC and Chiltern DC in putting forward a proposal to create two unitary authorities. The county of Bucks is 70 miles long and the north and south of the county are very different and it was felt that dividing the county would better serve residents. Cllr Mc Ennis reported that Frogmoor has always presented a challenge to the District Council and recently a consortium has purchased the Chiltern Centre and plan to develop it and the surrounding area.

The current major activity for the District Council is to curb the amount of begging occurring in the town centre – many of the beggars are 'imported' on a daily basis as our area is far more lucrative for them, however none of the beggars are really in financial distress nor are they homeless. Alongside this project is work to reduce the amount of anti-social behaviour.

Cllrs McEnnis and Teesdale will continue to support the Parish Council, in particular with planning applications and the work required to increase the availability of broadband in the whole of their Ward.

County Cllr Hayday – not present but asked that the Clerk should report that he continues to work on behalf of and with the Parish Council on the speeding issues on Chorley Road. He has funded an extra dog bin and its emptying for one year in Park Farm Road; through working with the Local Area Technician identified Portway Drive as a road which needs resurfacing and has submitted a request for the small road at the Chorley Road junction and Church Lane to be investigated for potential resurfacing. He has also asked for work to clear/side back the path between West Wycombe and Piddington – it has been started.

We had no representation from West Wycombe Pre-School or West Wycombe County Combined School

Thames Valley Police Neighbourhood Team was unable to attend as they had been tasked to accompany some foreign national prisoners to the airport.

Cllr Mrs Smith invited everyone to stay for light refreshments.