

Weston on the Green Annual Parish Meeting

held in the Village Hall on 15th April 2024

Minutes

Attendees:

Members of the parish.

Parish Councillors: Diane Bohm, Susan Davis, Tracy Rowan, Ben Lanham

Diane Bohm (Chairman of Parish Council) welcomed all to the Annual Parish meeting.

24.1 Resolution To Approve: Minutes of 2023 Annual Parish Meeting held on 18th April 2023

The minutes of 18th April 2023 Annual Parish meeting were moved by Diane Bohm and seconded by Patsy Parsons. The motion was supported unanimously by attendees at the meeting.

24.2 Annual Report – Diane Bohm (DB), Chair Weston on the Green Parish Council

DB provided the annual report from Weston on the Green Parish Council, which can be found in full on the Parish Council website.

Ongoing issues:

- Oak Tree footpath
- Southfield development
- Traffic issues on B430 and Church Lane
- Open Reach project / Gigaclear
- Great Wolf Resort
- Wider picture / development increasing near Chesterton and impact on surrounding villages
- Street flooding
- Storm Henke – tree across Church Lane
- Underlying concern over Cherwell District Council Local Plan and housing expectation

Stumbling blocks to solutions:

- OCC highways department does not have the manpower to get through their job list
- CDC Planning seemed to be overwhelmed
- Gigaclear unable to resolve its operational issues
- Southfield is in administration and has some specific issues presumably to do with construction

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Successes:

- Village News
- SOS Committee
- Foodbank
- Bus No 24
- Community Bus
- Growing group of volunteers
- Playground development work
- Excellent support from District and County Councillors

Changes:

With a turnover in housing ownership and a sense that there are many new and young(ish) families in the village, there have been conversations about how the history of the village and its distinct characteristics can be maintained whilst residents require some accommodation to modern living.

How does a village like ours resist becoming a convenient suburb and maintain its historic identity? What is worth preserving? What makes our village unique? Do we value this enough to work at keeping it alive?

Fortunately with groups such as the Village Hall Committee, Weston Society, Garden Club, WI and Neighbours Natter, there are opportunities for groups of us to come together. The challenge is how we support these local groups, take leadership roles and encourage newcomers to join in.

DB ended by commenting what a privilege it is to live in this village.

24.3 Playing field, Playground and Spinney – Councillor Ben Lanham (BL)

BL took over responsibility for the playing field and playground from Robin Stafford Allen in summer 2023.

The playing field continues to be used by Ardley Junior Football Club as well as hosting events such as the Coronation event and the annual firework display organised by the Village Hall; adults and children all enjoy the surroundings.

Ardley FC will use the field on a Wednesday evening in the summer and every other Saturday during the season, dependent on fixtures/weather.

Please feel free to contact BL with any concerns, as he will be talking to them shortly regarding next years usage.

Ongoing works in the area:

- Autumn 23: brambles and growth around perimeter cleared via contractors and volunteers
- 2024: contractor contracted for ongoing maintenance in 2024
- : tree audit undertaken in the spinney and wider parish to identify any required works

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Playground – issues raised at annual RoSPA inspection which were low/medium risk but worth inspecting further.

Playdale (initial installers) are able to offer ongoing maintenance as its their equipment and indicated there is a further 10 years life left in the playground equipment. As the bases of the units had rotted two new swing units have been replaced, one with a team swing and one with a cradle and tango seat; general repair works were also undertaken.

Regarding the future of the playground, quotes have been obtained for a number of additional pieces of apparatus and BL is open to suggestions for what residents would like to see in the playground e.g. zip wire/older climbing frame. New equipment could also be located outside of the existing playground footprint e.g. a woodland trail through the spinney, exercise pieces.

BL thanked all the volunteers who have helped with grass cutting, clearing the stream, litter picking and strimming work.

If you have any questions or wish to volunteer please contact the Parish Council.

A resident suggested using the community van to help with the transfer of football children, which will be raised with the community van group.

A question regarding the average price of the play equipment was raised, BL commented it would be £10-25k per piece depending on size. It was also noted that any special equipment placed in the spinney would have to be suitable for both adults and children.

24.4 Neighbourhood Watch – Patsy Parsons (PP)

PP introduced herself as the temporary co-ordinator of the Neighbourhood Watch (NW) scheme.

The NW scheme started in 1982 and is now a nationwide charity and free for all to join.

Aims of NW:

- reduce fear of crime
- encourage reporting of crime
- foster caring in the community
- inform members and public at large how to stay safe

The Weston on the Green scheme is based under the Thames Valley umbrella organisation. The scheme needs re-launching as it has been inactive for a while, in part due to Covid and lack of scheme support. The scheme is divided by streets in the village, all areas need a volunteer street co-ordinator in areas where they live. Once a group of volunteers is established the group can plan a way forward. The street coordinators would be a conduit for information, especially for those not on social media.

If you wish to find out more regarding the scheme or volunteer as a street co-ordinator please contact Patsy Parsons on wotg.nhw@gmail.com

24.5 Weston Save Our Shop (SOS) Committee – Sam Sharp (SS), Chair

SS provided an update regarding the community purchase of the village shop. He noted it had been in the press and on ITV Meridian news at Christmas 2023, he thanked the community for all the support.

The Community share offer and donations raised £167,080 out of a suggested £250,000. A further £15,000 was added via the Community Share Booster fund.

There have been 115 investors and 14 donors with 77% of investors coming from Weston on the Green.

A funding agreement has now been signed by the DLUHC regarding the Community Ownership Fund grant of £249,999 to be received from the UK Government. The grant is paid on request.

SS reported a further £232,000 still needs to be raised. An Ecology Loan was approved but at an interest rate of 9.04% and therefore other options including a community loan scheme are being explored. A further £170k has been pledged so far from supporters.

Once enough funds have been raised legal documents can be drafted and a formal offer made to the current owner, solicitors can be engaged and the application process to the Post Office can be started. Once the purchase is complete a new committee will be elected at the first member meeting.

Please contact SS (committee@weston-sos.org) if you want any further information or can offer any support regarding the community loan scheme or are interested in becoming treasurer.

A resident queried if the option is to buy the flat and shop together or can they be separated?

The option is to buy both together, the rental income from the flat above is required and embedded within the business plan in order to make it work financially.

Please see the SOS website for more information: <https://weston-sos.org>

Any Other Questions:

A resident asked about the removal of the oak tree footpath. It was highlighted that a method statement is still required to be submitted to Cherwell District Council regarding the removal of the footpath and the safe re-instatement of the ground around the tree. The Parish Council along with Roger Evans and the District and County Councillors are continuing to press for a resolution to this issue.

Members of the public recorded their thanks for all the hard work undertaken by DB and the other councillors.

DB thanked villagers for attending.

Should you wish to find out more information or offer help in any way at all please do contact one of the Councillors or email the Parish Clerk on: clerk@westononthegreen-pc.gov.uk

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