

Westfield Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Westfield Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 25th April 2013 at 7pm at the Westfield Methodist Church Hall, Wells Rd, Westfield

Present:: Cllr Bryan Wallbridge, Vice Chair of Westfield Parish Council, chairing the meeting.

Cllr Rob Appleyard, Westfield Parish Councillor and Westfield Councillor for Bath and North East Somerset (BANES)

Cllr Robin Moss, Westfield Parish Councillor and Westfield Councillor for Bath and North East Somerset Council.

Parish Councillors: Cllrs Andrew Butcher, Diana Cooper, Sue Hamilton Eddie Newman and Sheena Russell.

20 Members of the public.

Attending: Lesley Welch, Parish Clerk

Apologies: Cllr G Fuller (Chair of the Parish Council) due to a recent operation, Cllr A Clarke who was unwell, Cllr P Wilkinson who was on leave and the Neighbourhood Policing Team who did not have anyone free to attend.

1. Welcome and Overview of the Year

Cllr Bryan Wallbridge welcomed everyone to the meeting. This had been a very busy year which had seen the flags go up in Westfield for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, commemorative trees planted by Councillors and pupils at the local schools, the return of the Westfield Fun Day at Westhill Recreation Ground and many other events to help build community in Westfield.

Westfield was home to the successful Carnival in November again, and we saw the first switching on event of the Christmas Lights. The time capsule was buried so that people of Westfield 50 years hence will know more about life here today. The Westfield Allotment and Garden Society was highly commended by the Prince's Trust and the Parish Council achieved Quality Status – an important landmark which will enable the Council to consider taking on local services to improve the area, for example roadsweeping.

Cllr Wallbridge paid tribute to the work of Cllr Geoff Fuller in leading the Council during this busy second year, and wished him a speedy recovery from his recent operation.

2. **Minutes of the last meeting held 19th April 2012**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th April 2012 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. **Council Tax and Benefits Changes**

The Chairman introduced Cllr Robin Moss, Chair of the Parish Council's Finance and Personnel Committee. Cllr Moss introduced the raft of benefits changes implemented over the last weeks, in particular relating to the payment of Council tax by people on benefits or low income. If your Council tax appears higher than expected he urged people to contact either Cllr Rob Appleyard or himself either directly or via the Parish Council office and he was happy to answer specific questions on individual cases at the end of the meeting.

4. **Environment and Development in Westfield**

Cllr Eddie Newman outlined the work and aspirations of the Parish Council's Environment and Development Committee. Planning is the biggest part of the workload and the Committee tries to represent the opinions and thoughts of local people, so please contact the Parish Council's Environment and Development Committee with your views.

The Committee went out to tender on its landscape contract and new contractors started work on the recreation grounds in April.

The Chairman welcomed Joan Pack of the Westfield Questers to give an update on the Community Plan for Westfield. In March 2012 a notice went into the Journal asking for a cross section of the community to form a Steering Group. The object was to prepare a questionnaire to reach all households in Westfield, the responses of which would be scanned and formed into a Community Plan for Westfield. 12 people turned up for the meeting and meetings have been held every month since. The Group now has names and addresses of over 100 businesses, clubs, churches etc and they will be invited to a meeting on 19th June at Westhill Gardens Sports Club at 7.30pm. An experienced facilitator from the South West Foundation will manage the meeting and as a result the questionnaires should go out to every household in August. What is Westfield going to be like to live in in 2020? We are looking for a sensible plan with which this Parish can move forward. Mrs Pack encouraged people to come to the meeting in June – Westfield needs its own voice.

5. Finance

Chair of the Parish Council's Finance and Personnel Committee, Cllr Robin Moss outlined the 0% increase in the precept this year and the aim that this should remain until 2015. The Parish Council has built up reserves to 3 months net revenue expenditure as recommended by audit and it has achieved Quality Status which shows it has the necessary checks and balances to make sure spending is monitored. Changes in the benefits system mean that the Parish Council no longer receives income from those exempt from paying Council tax and precept. The Parish Council has received a grant of almost £20,000 to cover this shortfall but the grant funding is not in the control of the Parish Council and the Committee is making plans, should this reduce in future years.

Cllr Moss thanked fellow Finance and Personnel Committee members, in particular Cllr Phil Wilkinson as Vice Chair, and he expressed the Committee's sadness at the loss of Ted Pack, whose forensic eye on the accounts is much missed.

6. Bath and North East Somerset Councillors' report

Cllr Rob Appleyard reported on the BANES adoption of the Core Strategy which Inspectors have yet to approve.

The BANES Planning Committee turned down an application for a super-store in Westfield, despite opposing views, and it is now waiting to hear whether this will go to appeal.

7. Questions from the Public

When is the official guide due out? The Westfield Guide is due to be circulated in the week commencing 3rd June.

The local butchers celebrate their centenary this year and input in the time capsule would have been appreciated: Apologies, this was advertised in the Westfield Warbler at various points last year, but it is good to see the butchers were included in the last edition of the Westfield Warbler, and they will be in the Westfield Guide.

How many more homes are going to be built before some significant form of employment is placed in Westfield for local people? The Sainsbury's application would have provided much needed work for local people. Westfield Parish Council, after a robust discussion decided not to object to the Planning Application from Sainsbury's and BANES was aware of this view when they made the decision against it.

There is fly tipping at Westhill Recreation Ground – are standards slipping at the recreation grounds? New contractors started at the

recreation grounds this month. Any flytipping should be reported to Council Connect on 01225 394041. The Parish Council is looking to bring litter and road sweeping into its control, if funding allows and it is hoped this will come to fruition next year. In addition Cllr Hamilton advertised for a litter pick last year but only herself, Cllr Appleyard and one other turned out.

Speeding – what can be done? Speed indicator devices had been requested for some of the side roads but this was resisted by the Police. Essentially speeding is a problem by the community in the community and people should let the Police know when it occurs so that intelligence can be built up on the places where it occurs the most. The Police and Community Together (PACT) meetings welcome suggestions on how to deal with the problem.

The state of the roads and having to zig zag where the road has been dug up so often – surely this can not go on? The perception is that by comparison to other areas of BANES, this is not too bad a problem. There is a process for dealing with such complaints – when BANES is informed they send an engineer who ensures that it meets the criteria of a pothole. If it meets the criteria it is marked with lines and contractors put it into their next work cycle. This might take 4-6 weeks. BANES is under severe budgetary constraints. People are strongly advised to inform the Ward Councillors, Cllr Rob Appleyard and Robin Moss, when making the complaint and they will actively chase up.

The drain cover opposite the church needs attention The Ward Councillors to look into this.

8. **Summing up and closure of the meeting**

Cllr Wallbridge thanked everyone for attending. There is a busy year ahead and a lot of strong interest in Westfield. Please keep the Parish Council informed as issues arise and we have a great strength in the Ward Councillors Rob Appleyard and Robin Moss. If anyone is interested in working with the Westfield Questers please talk to Joan Pack after the meeting. The Community Plan will be a very significant document for Westfield and the more people involved the better.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm.