



Notes of the Westcott Village Association Open Meeting Held on 9th May 2019 at Holy Trinity Church

<u>Present from the WVA Committee</u>	<u>Apologies from the WVA Committee</u>
Tim Way (Chairman)	Andrew Copeland
Hugh Broom	Hazel Watson
Jo Astor	
Sandra Ede	
Edwina Gordon	<u>Attendee List</u>
Edwin Harland	See attached sign in list
James Leaver	
James Friend	

1. **Agenda**

TW opened the meeting and outlined the agenda;

- a. Update on the new WVA constitution
- b. The Hut development
- c. Heathland below the church
- d. The Crown and Indigo Spice planning applications
- e. Village Magazine flyer about the WVA
- f. Opportunity for AOB

2. **New WVA Constitution**

The application has been registered but the Charity's Commission have indicated a delay of 4 to 6 months before they are able to start processing the application. A further update will be provided in due course. No questions were raised by the audience.

3. **The Hut Development**

TW explained he was disappointed to announce, on behalf of the Hut trustees, that after 2 – 3 years of discussions, it has not been possible for agreement to be reached to put a community centre, surgery, parking and housing on the Hut site. Dr Vijay is currently announcing this to the Dorking Medical Practice staff.

The main issue was around the financing of the surgery, which needs to be large enough to accommodate the growing demand of its catchment area, balanced alongside a community centre

which is large enough to meet the village's needs.

It has now been agreed that the WVA will lead a fresh feasibility study of what is needed from a combined community centre and a surgery, taking a neutral stance, rather than just focusing on what could be put on the Hut site in isolation. The WVA will be leading this review on behalf the other village organisations including, the church, the school, the Sports Club, the Hut and the Reading Room.

The Hut trustees are still having discussions with Latchmere, the developer, to see if there is any way something could be developed on the Hut site.

TW opened the floor to questions from the audience;

- a. Question from Madeline Brooks - if you didn't have the community hall on the Hut site and just had houses and the surgery is that financially viable?
 - i. Answered by James Friend - it's more about the commercials and what the charity commission will allow the Hut trustees to do to effectively subsidize a private business, which an NHS surgery effectively is.
- b. Question from John Davey – is there a likelihood you would only get housing on that site?
 - i. Answered by TW – very unlikely given the site is currently a community asset.
- c. Question from Adrian Robinson – what's the status of the current Riverbank Surgery?
 - i. Answered by Tim - Dr Guildler retires on the 29th June 2019, the surgery will continue at Riverbank. Dorking Medical practice will seek to keep it open in its current location on a relatively open ended basis, although they would prefer to move to a more permanent site
- d. Question from Nancy Lund – are any Hut trustees present here today and if not, why not? It feels like there is a split between the Hut and the WVA?
 - i. Answered by TW - there is definitely no split, the discussions are just quite sensitive. The Hut trustees are personally liable so they have to be cautious. There are daily discussions taking place between TW as WVA Chair and Glenn Wylie as Chair of the Hut trustees. The WVA is trying to bring everyone together and explore a range of ideas.

- e. Question from Edward Bennett – is it not more important to have a surgery than another village hall? The Hut has been closed for 2 years and not been missed.
 - i. Answered by TW – some sections of the community have missed it. Given the retirement of Dr Guildler and the issues with Riverbank Surgery the priority is to find a location for the surgery, even if it is a temporary one.

- f. Question from a resident who plays bridge at the reading room and had been told it was due to be demolished and rebuilt. The Reading Room is very well used and they are concerned it will be demolished and their bridge club will be homeless.
 - i. Answered by Alan Reif, Chair of the Reading Room trustees – there are absolutely no plans to demolish the Reading Room. The building, which was built around 50 years ago, it is reaching the end of its natural life. The plans for its long-term future will be developed once the WVA have completed their feasibility study regarding future facilities in partnership with other village organisations. In the meantime the trustees are confident they can keep the Reading Room going in its current condition for another 5-10 years.

- g. Question from Mike Flower – given the life of the Reading Room is 5-10 years doesn't this imply the surgery has to be on the Hut site?
 - i. Answer from TW - there are a number of possibilities to be explored including other locations such as St Johns. The site for a surgery needs to be between 1/3 to 1/2 of an acre. No potential sites are without difficulties, which is the reason for doing a feasibility study. Whatever is proposed needs to be put to the village so their views can be taken in to account.

- h. Second question from Mike Flower – given discussions will take 6 to 9 months to reach agreement, then the same again for planning and longer to build, this could take 3 years, so does this mean we will lose Tom's facility?
 - i. Answer from TW - that has to be part of the discussions and will influence the outcome.

- i. Question from Madeline Brooks – could the vicarage site be part of our thinking?
 - i. TW declined to comment on the Vicarage site which was owned by the diocese and had the Vicar and his

family living in it.

4. **Heathland below the Church**

TW explained to the meeting that the land has been cleared as a result of discussions between the Church and the Wotton Estate. The Church wanted to clear the bank to improve views of the Church. The Wotton Estate cleared it and the Church has agreed to maintain it. The Church have subsequently asked the WVA to help. With the help of Burt Broom, it is intended that the land will be contoured, the stumps and bracken removed, it will then be ploughed and reseeded, so that by next Spring it should be a bank with meadow grasses. This means in the short term it will look worse before it looks better. A number of views were expressed as to whether it has been a good thing or not. Following feedback about the visibility of parked cars it has subsequently been agreed to plant a mixed species hedge to screen them from the road. The Wotton Estate have, however, reiterated the current parking is on private land and people shouldn't be parking there. The Church were asked by the Estate if they would help police the parking with chains or posts but the Church did not feel that was appropriate.

TW opened the floor to questions from the audience:

- a. Question from Jo Astor (WVA committee member) – it feels as if the Church did not think the plan through in advance. There is some evidence that the more open vista has increased the speed of traffic leaving the village. We know the Highways Agency recently presented evidence of how planting natural landscape features (such as trees and shrubs by the roadside) can help slow traffic down, so it is a shame given the speeding problem in the village that we seem to have made things worse as a result of this clearance.
 - i. Answer from TW – the comments were noted; TW commented that work was continuing with Surrey AONB Highways Working Group meeting to look at ways in which natural landscape features could have a calming effect on traffic through the village.

5. **The Crown & Indigo Spice Planning Applications**

Indigo Spice - the owners of Indigo Spice have put in an appeal against the rejection of their planning application. James Friend confirmed that the Planning Inspectorate has informed MVDC they have everything they need for the appeal proceedings, although there is no date currently set for that appeal to be heard. TW explained once the outcome of the appeal is known the WVA will approach the owners about what can be done to improve the look of the building in the meantime as it is an eye-sore as you enter the

village from the west.

The Crown – a revised planning application is due to be put in shortly. The plan is understood to be for the existing pub to be converted in to three dwellings. There will be two (2 or 3 bed) new properties built to mirror the style of the cottages opposite. The existing building on the right hand side will also be converted in to a dwelling. Plus, at the rear of the site, another new property will be built on the footprint of an earlier building that was previously demolished. The WVA is supportive of the change of use from commercial to residential.

- a. Subsequent question from Madeline Brookes raised under AOB – what is the planning application for Indigo Spice that they are appealing?
 - i. Answer from James Friend - the first application was to build four dwellings, this was amended following the advise of planning officers and resubmitted as three dwellings. However, the application was rejected due to the lack sufficient car parking and it being in conflict with the policy within the Westcott Neighbourhood Development Plan.

6. **WVA Promotional Flyer**

Tim showed a copy of the A5 flyer due to be distributed next month via the village magazine. There is a Street Stewards meeting on Saturday 11th May to brief them in advance of their annual visits to all households in the village. The WVA will also be outside Balchins Store on the 8th June and present at WESTFest in July. They also plan to be at the Cricket Club 150th Anniversary Celebration event on the 23rd June.

It was also advised that the Cricket Club event will start at 12pm and there will be a BBQ and activities for children.

Edwina Gordon made a plea for new Street Stewards to cover gaps in the village and reiterated the commitment is only once a year and full briefings are given. Anyone interested was asked to contact Edwina.

7. **AOB**

a. **Westcott Village Sign**

Tim Gowing asked about the Westcott Village entry sign on the A25 approaching from Dorking as it is missing following it being vandalized within 48 hours of being put up.

- i. Answer by TW - Hazel Watson is chasing up Highways on our behalf.

b. Modest Expansion of Villages

A resident asked what the latest information was regarding the Modest Expansion of Villages and could the proposed sites accommodate the new surgery?

- i. TW answered - further news is expected from MVDC towards the end of June when the planning department will release the next stage of the public consultation having reviewed all the sites across the district.
- ii. James Friend also advised that given the change of control of the Council and that neither of the local Councilors for Westcott and the surrounding District are supportive of the proposals he thinks it unlikely MVDC will be ready to feed back by the end of June.

c. Woods opposite the church

Murray Clark asked about use of the woods opposite the church by mountain bikers who are then coming out on to the footpath and jumping out on to the roads

- i. TW answered – he would write to Wotton Estate asking them if they could find a way to deal with the matter.

d. Footbridge at junction of Westcott Street, Balchins Lane and Hole Hill

Mike Flower asked, if there was any news on the footbridge across the Pippbrook at the end of Westcott Street and Balchins Lane?

- i. TW answered - the concrete plinths have been installed on which to rest the bridge; he will try to get an update from Highways.

Edwina Gordon (WVA Committee member) also asked about the big tree which has grown up on the bank near the footbridge which is causing a problem and further could a litter bin be put nearby to deal with increasing amounts of litter?

- ii. TW answered – part of the difficulty will be identifying who owns the land to see who is responsible for the tree

e. The Pound restoration

Tim Gowing asked, is there any further news on the refurbishment of The Pound?

- i. TW replied he had received a letter to say the work has started, they have cleared out the inside, it will be

sprayed and barrier matting installed. A specialist stonemason will then take the wall down and the stones will be individually numbered so it is put back in the same order. It is quite a complicated piece of restoration. Once the weather improves work will start in earnest.

f. **The Hut Trustees**

Adrian Robinson asked that the Trustees of the Hut have a personal invitation to the next Open Meeting to ensure they attend?

i. Tim agreed to action at the next Chairperson's Forum.

g. **WVA website & Facebook page**

Jo Astor was asked to give a brief update on the new WVA website. Jo explained it has been developed to be the hub of information for residents and visitors to the village. There is a "What's On" section including details of the numerous clubs and societies that meet in the village, plus a Village Diary. There are further details about the WVA itself with all agendas and minutes published, plus sections to do with Planning, further details about the history of Westcott and local businesses. The news section keeps people up to date with latest news and events. Feedback on the site is always welcomed so we can continue to keep it relevant to all. It is felt to be one of the best village websites around.

Jo also explained there is a WVA Facebook page, which is also proving to be very popular and is a good way to communicate news and events in the village. All were encouraged to "like" and "follow" the page.

The meeting congratulated the WVA for the excellent web site and TW thanked Jo Astor and Andrew Copeland for all their hard work in developing and maintaining it.

h. **District Councillor**

James Friend, as Westcott's District Councillor, reminded residents that, in addition to the WVA, village matters could be addressed to him by phone or email.

That being the end of business Tim Way thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 8.23pm

Westcott Village Association Open Meeting – 9th May 2019
Attendee List

1. Keith Bland-Botham
2. Rebecca Taylor
3. John Howell
4. Aline Bennett
5. Edward Bennett
6. John Davey
7. Elisa Davey
8. Nicky Gray
9. Clare Harman
10. Fleur Suglih-Symons
11. Alan Reif
12. Adrian Robinson
13. David McCombe
14. Heather McCombe
15. Mike Flower
16. Colin Pilbeam
17. Hazel Pilbeam
18. Jacki Moss
19. Poppy Hodges
20. Don Mair
21. Nick Lund
22. Nancy Lund
23. Murray Clark
24. Alan Roome
25. Tim Gowing
26. Murray Stephen
27. Andrew Lewis
28. Madeline Brooks
29. Rob Potter
30. Liz Potter
31. Alan O'Hea
32. Gill O'Hea