



Notes of the Westcott Village Association Open Meeting Held at Holy Trinity Church at 19.30 hours on 12th September 2019

Present from the WVA Committee:

Hugh Broom (acting Chairman)
Edwin Harland
Edwina Gordon
James Leaver
Sandra Ede
Nick Lund

Apologies for absence

Tim Way
Andrew Copeland

In attendance

Hazel Watson (County Councillor)
James Friend (District Councillor)

Attendees

Bernd Ratzke	Helen & Glen Mardell	Murray Stephen
John & Jacki Moss	Angela Deloford	Alan Reif
Steve Brooks	Elisa & John Davey	John Clachan
Andrew Gordon	Mike Flower	Andrew & Katie Lewis
Ted Wilde	Keith-Bland Botham	

1. Agenda

Bert Broom opened the meeting welcoming those present. The agenda for the meeting was as follows:

- Minutes of the Open Meeting held on 9th May 2019
- Matters Arising
- Community Facilities and Doctor's Surgery

- Any other matters

Bert Broom introduced Bernd Ratzke, an independent lawyer who is facilitating progress in relation to community facilities and a doctor's surgery.

2. Community Facilities and Doctor's Surgery

Bernd updated the meeting on latest developments. The Hut is in severe disrepair. The Reading Room is in better condition but was not designed to last forever. Of the other village facilities (such as St John's), each has drawbacks. Matters were complicated by Tom Guilder's retirement. Until recently there had not been much progress in finding a solution to the question of how to provide the village with community facility and doctor's surgery. However, recently the trustees of the Hut and the Reading Room have signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at combining assets to produce a common facility. The Hut has a surprisingly big footprint and it is worthy of consideration as becoming the community facility and doctor's surgery. But there are various issues:

- (i) Obviously a planning question – could we build on the Reading Room site to create the necessary value?
- (ii) Would the Charity Commission give their agreement? (but the Hut and Reading Room do have similar object clauses which helps)

Dorking Surgery has now taken over Tom Guilder's practice. Their current building is too small and could not accommodate growth from Westcott residents. They are therefore they are keen to see if the Hut could accommodate space for them.

A consultancy practice based in Guildford, experienced in this kind of work has now been commissioned to undertake a feasibility study in relation to possible locations for the planned community facility and doctor's surgery and associated planning issues. The costs are being met by the Reading Room and the Dorking Surgery together with much appreciated financial support from the WVA.

Elisa Davey made the point that the residents of Pointers Hill were not happy with the way things were moving. She felt the village was being railroaded and that there had been a lack of consultation as to next steps. She is a regular user of the Reading Room and expressed concern as to where the bridge club could meet if the Reading Room were turned into houses. She questioned the high costs of using the Reading Room and enquired as to the financial situation of the Reading Room. Bernd Ratzke advised that the accounts of charities were normally available from the Charities Commission.

John Davey expressed a concern that the village could lose both the Reading Room and the Hut. Bernd commented that the objective was to find a solution comprising a community facility and doctor's surgery which would meet the future needs of the village.

Edward Wilde asked if a new charity would be formed with all the assets of the Hut and the Reading Room merged into a new entity. Bernd Ratzke confirmed this was the most likely outcome. Furthermore, it was also likely that existing trustees from the Hut and the Reading Room could have a role in the new entity (which would probably be a charitable incorporated organisation, a so-called CIO).

Helen Mardell congratulated Bernd Ratzke and the WVA on the progress made. There was applause.

Jacki Moss asked if the consultants were looking at all the alternatives or just the one Bernd Ratzke had mentioned (whereby the Reading Room would become houses and the Hut would become a surgery and community centre.) Bernd Ratzke assured the meeting that all possible alternatives within the village were being looked at. There was an open mind.

Mike Flower commended Bernd Ratzke and the WVA on the progress made.

Steve Brooks explained his lengthy experience of the Reading Room. Clearing moss on the roof was now a risky procedure. He said the uprights were now rotting and something would have to be done in the next few years. The Reading Room trustees had been looking at different possibilities for some time. In spite of his affection for the site, he believed firmly it was time to move on.

Murray Stephen summed up the situation by saying that unless we acted now the Reading Room would follow the Hut and become unsafe and unusable.

Elisa Davey asked about timing. Bernd Ratzke said this was challenging to estimate, but thought 6-9 months for planning. Charity Commission approval would also take time. However, he said that the Charity Commission was becoming more familiar with and receptive to issues such as those faced by Westcott residents.

Alan Reif said that the Reading Room was not currently falling down but a survey five years ago estimated that it had a life of a further ten years. So being optimistic he said he hoped it had five years remaining.

Mike Flower asked if St John's was on the table as a possible location. Bernd Ratzke explained that consent from the Church Commissioners was needed for any change to this building or the use thereof. However, if the surgery ended up on the Hut site, St John's could perhaps be used as facility for activities such as yoga and complementary medicine.

James Friend expressed his gratitude to Bernd Ratzke.

Elisa Davey said that in general there was too much focus on developing houses in the village, citing The Crown, Indigo Spice and the Garden Hill as recent examples.

3. Minutes and matters arising from the meeting held on 9th May 2019

The village sign: Hazel Watson reported that there had been an error by highways meaning that the matter was still in progress.

Future Mole Valley Local Plan consultation: Bert Broom said that this consultation which had been scheduled to take place between 21 October and 1 December was postponed again only yesterday (11 Sept 2019) due to political uncertainties. More details are available here: <http://futuremolevalley.org/>

Mountain Bikers cycling dangerously: Tim Way had written to Wotton Estate.

Bridge at bottom of Westcott Street: now completed; thanks to Hazel Watson were expressed. Edwina Gordon commented that the tree was preventing sight of the bridge and impeding children playing. Hazel Watson agreed to find out who owes the land in question.

Restoration of the Pound: still ongoing and in progress.

4. Any other matters

a. Dangerous Cycling

Steve Brooks had met a resident whose dog had been seriously injured by a cyclist (who had subsequently cycled off). He said that we should be more vocal in raising concerns about dangerous cyclists.

Different attendees expressed varying views. James Leaver sought to distinguish between road and off-road cyclists. James Friend recommended reporting the matter to the police. Jacki Moss asked who is responsible for overgrown cycle paths. Bert Broom

said that the landowner was responsible and that in his case, he did his best. Edwin Harland endorsed Steve's suggestion that a notice in Nirvana Cycles would do no harm and might do good. Potentially stating that free bicycle bells were available on application from the WVA.

b. Indigo Spice

Boarded up windows have been painted which is progress. James Friend mentioned that a revised planning application had been submitted. The committee would be discussing it in the next hour.

There being no further matters raised, the meeting closed at approximately 2035 hours.

Upcoming Meetings:

AGM: Wednesday 16th October 19.45

Open Meeting: Thursday 12th December 2019 19.30

both at Holy Trinity Church