



WESTCOTT VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the First Annual General Meeting of the Westcott Village Association held on Zoom Thursday 8th October 2020 from 7.45pm

Minutes are recorded by Agenda item number as follows:

1. Opening & Welcome: Chairman Tim Way (TEW) opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explaining the process and procedures for the evening using the Zoom Meeting Software including how voting would take place when votes were required.

The Agenda, Chairman's Report and Accounts together with the Draft Minutes of the 2019 AGM had been made available on the WVA Website from mid September for all WVA Members and Westcott Residents to read and review in advance of the AGM.

2. Apologies: Apologies were received from Andrea & John Gabb.

3. To adopt the Minutes of the 45th & Final AGM of the Old Westcott Village Association:

A suggested amendment to the circulated draft had been submitted by **Richard Packer** to clarify a point raised in Mike Flowers' question regarding the Doctor's surgery. The suggested amendment was as follows:

Replace*South Street Surgery* would continue to operate the *Meadowbank Surgery*...
with*Dorking Medical Practice* would continue to operate the *Riverbank Surgery*.....

Including this amendment, the Minutes were accepted as a true record of proceedings at the 2019 AGM and were unanimously approved by the Meeting. A revised copy of the Minutes will be placed on the WVA Website.

4. To consider matters arising from these Minutes:

The Secretary confirmed that the progress and or resolution of matters arising have been dealt with specifically in the first part of the Chairman's Report.

5. To receive the Chairman's Report:

Instead of reading his Report verbatim, TEW chose to summarise the main themes the WVA were dealing with and expressed a preference for attendees to ask any specific questions under item nine of the Agenda unless they felt it necessary to raise them now.

He outlined the main themes being pursued by the WVA as:

- i) To engage with Residents of Westcott and continue to identify matters and issues that interest and impact on them
- ii) To work with other Village Organisations so activity is carried out in a joined up way

iii) To promote pride in the Village and its appearance - for example Litter picks, street cleaning, Dog Poo control, tackling traffic speeds and noise pollution. TEW specifically pointed out that this latter problem was now being recognised by the County and District Councils as a Surrey Hills problem. The matter would be dealt with more fully under items eight and nine of the Agenda.

There were no questions raised concerning the 2019 / 2020 Chairman's Report.

6. (i) To receive the final set of Accounts for the old WVA and

(ii) to consider draft management accounts showing the combined position of the old and new WVA for the year to July 2020 and the comparative 12 months.

Edwin Harland (EH) explained that the final WVA accounts for the period to 7th February 2020 were for the old WVA Charity to the date it was terminated. The new WVA has taken 31st March as its year end as he felt it to be a more appropriate cut off point for future reporting purposes. The next set of formal accounts will be prepared to 31st March 2021. In order to compare a current twelve month activity with a prior twelve month comparative, an Old and New combined financial statement to 31st July 2020 has been published. This has been compared to the previous twelve months and is the basis for EH comments

EH explained that in Receipts, Subscriptions and Donations had fallen by 12%, or £431, which was probably a very good result given the current problems. He thanked Edwina Gordon and the Street Stewards for their hard work. Gift Aid has increased which is a positive sign but there was no Westfest income. Payments were £1,154 higher, but included a £2,500 Grant supporting the Hut / Reading Room Project and £1,332 spent on Speed & Noise Reduction initiatives including car stickers and road signage.

As at the end of July, the bank balance was nearly £13,410.

EH confirmed that the Committee would shortly be acting on two fronts to increase income as follows:

- i) To contact as many as possible of the 100 or so Households who had subscribed for Membership last year but had made no renewal payment this year and
- ii) To contact all Members to ask whether they would Gift Aid their Subscription if they had not already done so.

In response to a request from **Nancy Lund**, EH agreed to explain simply how Gift Aid works in the correspondence with Members, to reassure and encourage them to reply positively.

Other comments and questions were raised as follows:

Judith Packer suggested that a 'reminder card' summarising what the WVA do might be useful for Westcott Residents / Households.

Andrew Gordon asked if the WVA had email addresses for non Members. Nick Lund replied that the WVA did not, adding that the WVA didn't have email addresses for all Members either. He stressed the need for all Members and non Members to provide e mail addresses to him via contact@westcottvillage.com

Nancy Lund questioned whether the benefits of being a Member were being clearly articulated by the Committee so Households could make an informed choice. TEW replied that the leaflet circulated in the summer to all Households asking for Members included a list of activities undertaken in the last few years for the benefit of Westcott Residents but recognised that every opportunity - including his Chairman's Report to the AGM and Magazine updates should be used to update and inform Members and potential Members.

TEW also confirmed that the Committee would shortly look at the option of making Residency the criteria for Membership without any required subscription, reverting to donations rather than subscriptions as the principal form of income.

Ian Grainger asked whether many subscriptions were paid by Standing Order. NL replied that as our Bank was unable to distinguish SO payments from other bank transfers, the exact number is not known however, that said, it isn't many. This is despite its obvious benefits for the Subscriber and the WVA and the extensive publicity Standing Order payments have been given.

IG went on to say that in his view £10 was great value and wondered when it was increased to this amount. TEW replied that it was raised from £5 to £10 per Household two years ago when he took office and it didn't provoke any adverse reaction. TEW did stress though that he is mindful that whilst for some £10 is not a significant sum, for others it was.

Judith Packer noted that the WVA needed to attract more interest and representation from the NE of the Village and therefore the WVA might consider generating funding for specific ideas rather than generally by subscription.

At this point, TEW thanked Hugh Parry for his support as Independent Examiner of the WVA Accounts.

The Accounts were then received and approved unanimously.

7. To elect the Officers, Committee Members and the Independent Examiner for the forthcoming year.

TEW then informed Attendees that since the publication of the Agenda, Edwina Gordon had decided to stand down as a Trustee and as Membership Secretary. In thanking Edwina, TEW commented that she has served the Village for eight years with distinction and she would be sorely missed. Edwina's offer to ensure a smooth transfer of her responsibilities and her wealth of knowledge was accepted gratefully. On behalf of the Committee, all WVA Members and Westcott Residents, TEW thanked Edwina again.

The following have put themselves forward for re-election as WVA Officers and/or Trustees:

Tim Way as Chairman, Hugh Broom as Deputy Chairman, Edwin Harland as Treasurer, Paul Goddard as Secretary, Simon Bradley, Andrew Copeland, Sandra Ede, James Leaver and Nick Lund.

These nominations were proposed and seconded, and unanimously approved by the Meeting. The Committee will consider how best to replace Edwina as soon as possible. Anyone interested in becoming a Trustee was asked to contact the Chairman in the first instance.

8 To answer questions raised by Members in advance of the Meeting:

Question from **Geoff Muge** in three parts, each addressed by **James Leaver**.

Q1) With the current deteriorating state of the Cricketers spoiling the village, and no progress in converting this into some useful accommodation, why is the lack of parking the excuse? Why does it need dedicated parking when the majority of the village parks on the roads?

Answer: The WVA opposed the planning application for the conversion of the building into two apartments because the parking provision did not meet the requirement for new dwellings set out in the Westcott Neighbourhood Development Plan of two off street parking places per two bedroom property. This requirement was set in response to Residents feedback that car parking arrangements in the Village needed to be improved wherever possible. The bottom of Heath Rise also has double yellow lines preventing street parking. Other possible solutions have been discounted including using the Church parking area as it is privately owned by Wotton Estates, or blocking the Heath Rise exit / entrance to the A25 because Surrey Highways would take several years to consider it and even then would probably refuse.

The Owner of the Cricketers has been offered potential parking solutions but has not found any of them acceptable.

As to the deteriorating condition of the building, WVA have formally expressed concerns to MVDC about its visual impact and we await an outcome.

Q2) Related to this issue and the lack of sensible parking for the church for services, weddings and funerals, why isn't the current parking area converted to accommodate many more cars by turning the existing parallel to the road spaces by 90 degrees facing the meadow bank? This would solve the parking for the church and the Cricketers and have no impact on the environment. The new hedge will cause further problems once it grows as drivers will then be opening their doors directly into a hedge and forcing them to park further away and into the very narrow road leading to the church.

Answer: The land used for parking is privately owned by Wotton Estates and they determine what it is / can be used for. They are not minded to provide car parking for residential schemes in the Village.

Q3) What is the plan to make better use of the empty Balchins Stores & Post Office?

Answer: The building is privately owned and has been marketed for full conversion to residential use. The WVA has no say in how a property is marketed or for what price. It is the responsibility of the Owners to be realistic in what they want to achieve. We will be ready to speak with the new owners about their plans.

There was also a brief discussion on the future of Masters House - being the location of the Bakery, Core Fit and other businesses. JL confirmed that it is being sold and the WVA is committed to do what it could to retain these buildings for commercial use and not residential use in accordance with the Westcott Neighbourhood Development Plan. It is hoped that whoever takes over the Bakery might set up a Post Office but at this stage there is no certainty of this.

A question from **Edward Bennett** on the use of Noise Cameras to identify errant motor cycles and cars was addressed later in the Meeting by Nick Lund in a wider update of the progress on the Speed and Noise Reduction Initiative.

9. To conduct any other business relating to the WVA:

The Chairman asked if there were any matters arising:

Helen Everett voiced her concern about the danger for vehicles turning right out of Furlong Road onto the A25 next to Balchins Stores because of the speed of traffic on the A25. She

posed a question - Will it take accidents and / or fatalities to force Surrey County Council to do something to curb speeds and so reduce the risks?

In answering this point, **County Councillor, Hazel Watson** commented that the pedestrian crossing and lights were positioned in what is the only reasonable and safe place given the sight lines and distances drivers needed. She committed her support wherever possible for the package of measures the WVA and Residents were trying to put in place to reduce vehicle speeds and noise.

Elizabeth Mair suggested that the single yellow line at the top of Westcott Street immediately before the A25 should be a double yellow line because vehicles parked there - often vans - made the road too narrow for more than one vehicle to pass. This made the Westcott Street junction with the A25 difficult and dangerous to use for traffic going on to and exiting the main road.

Hazel Watson replied that an assessment of 'Yellow Line Requirements' by the County Council is carried out every couple of years. The deadline for submissions to be considered in the next assessment is the end of this month - October 2020. This assessment will likely take up to two years before a decision is made on whether to change the single line to a double line. TEW asked Elizabeth if she could write to him with her concerns urgently so that a decision could be made by the WVA on whether to support the application, and if so make it by the end of October.

Nick Lund then provided an update on the **Speed and Noise Reduction Initiatives** being pursued by the WVA including as follows:

- Car stickers promoting the 30mph speed limit have been distributed though few cars in Westcott display them currently. More are available. NL reminded everyone that Residents can positively influence speeds in the Village by keeping to limits themselves
- There has been a very positive response to the nascent Speedwatch programme. We are still waiting for confirmation of when and how Volunteers will be trained as the Police will not undertake online training. The Police will not release the radar kit until this training is completed. Permitted locations in the Village where Volunteers will be allowed to monitor speeds are still to be agreed. Again we are waiting for the appropriate Authorities to act. More Volunteers are welcome for what will be a very visible sign of how serious we are about curtailing speeds through the Village
- Given the keen interest across Surrey to control noisy motorbikes and their owners, NL confirmed that Surrey Police have purchased four Noise Cameras to evaluate and trial their effectiveness. He has put forward Westcott as a suitable trial location to the Police and Crime Commissioner and a response is awaited
- The triangular signs asking Bikers to go quietly through the Village have been in place for three months and are thought anecdotally to have had a positive impact. Other Villages have expressed interest in copying them
- Investigations are continuing to as to how best to improve the impact of Speed related signage on the roads into the Village especially at the Eastern end of the Village where the speed limit is so frequently ignored. It doesn't help that from the top of Coast Hill almost to Holy Trinity Church, it isn't obvious that the A25 is in a built up area. Ideally we need to make it much clearer to motorists that they are in the Village a long way before the current 30mph limit sign
- NL emphasised that we cannot rely on Government Funding for pay for any improvements. Some funds might be available via the MVDC if a suitable application can be made. These are being pursued
- TEW agreed to schedule and circulate indicative costs for new equipment

Ian Grainger commented that the top of the hill on the A25 - Sandrock Rd to Holy Trinity Church area - is a real nightmare and is pleased to hear that this is being recognised. He says that motorists really only slow down when they see the Pedestrian Crossing in the middle of the Village rather than at the 30mph limit sign. He urged everyone to watch the Mickleham video on UTube

TEW noted that 'Operation SNAP' was live whereby members of the public are being encouraged to take video on their phone of speeding and careless driving / riding and uploading the details for possible review by the Police. TEW has requested information on this and how noise levels can be recorded on phones from the Police so he can circulate information and instructions to Westcott Residents

TEW also noted that the Authorities generally - Councils and Police - are well aware that Speed and Noise is a significant current problem for villages on or near both the A24 and the A25.

Fibre Optic Broadband: TEW is aware that a Community Fibre Partnership scheme has been launched by BT Openreach with the objective of improving the speed and reliability of Broadband in the UK. Rural areas might qualify for funding from the Government. If this is cost effective, it might be of great interest to Village Residents. The WVA will investigate and if thought to be of interest, potentially co-ordinate a response and / or application.

Future GP Medical Services in Westcott: Bernd Ratzke, Chair of the joint Hut / Reading Room Working Party gave a detailed overview of the history and current status of the merger of the Charities and the provision of a replacement surgery in Westcott when Riverbank closes.

In summary:

The two Charities are in the process of being merged but before that can take place the Members of both need to be consulted and an agreement reached formally. Only then can a merged unified charity begin to make decisions about use of the land assets they hold.

BR confirmed that the NHS are persuaded that a Surgery is needed in Westcott but as yet they haven't made a final decision. It is not known how long the current Surgery will be available given the current agreement ends in February 2021 or what options there are to provide services thereafter.

BR stressed that whilst progress is being made, there is still much to be done and it will take a considerable time to conclude - for instance he could not see any building work starting for at least a year from now even if matters progressed at a reasonable pace.

AGM Conclusion:

There being no further questions and no further business, Tim Way thanked Residents for their support in attending the AGM and expressing their views which formed the basis of everything which the WVA did on their behalf.

The meeting closed at 21:20.

AGM Attendees: As noted from Zoom.

Some potential mistakes and omissions. Apologies for those.

Alan Reif
Alda Andreotti
Andrew
Andy
Bernd Ratzke
Clare McMillan
Colin and Hazel Pilbeam
Don and Elizabeth Mair
Don Rolt
Elizabeth
Edwina and Andrew Gordon
Geoff Muge
Gill Andreotti
Helen Exerett
Isolde and Roger
Jackie Moss
Jo Smewing
John
John Clachan
Judith Packer
Mrray Stephen
Mancy Lund
Natnoo
Paul and Carol Morris
Sally Hewetson
Susan McIntosh
Timothy
Hazel Watson
James Friend
Tim Way
Edwin Harland
Simon Bradley
Nick Lund
James Leaver
Sandra Ede
Paul Goddard