

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2021/2022

Over the last year, the Westcott Village Association has continued to work on your behalf to make improvements to life in the village. There have been changes on the Committee and during the year, Andrew Copeland, Bert Broom, Sandra Ede and Simon Bradley have stepped down as Trustees. Sandra had served for 15 years which was recognised with a civic award presented to her by Chris Hunt, the Chairman of Mole Valley District Council at the March Open Meeting. Jon Mears has agreed to join the Committee and Jo Astor has re-joined to take responsibility for communications. We are very grateful to both Jon and Jo and indeed to all those who over the last year have stepped forward voluntarily, or when asked, to make their contribution to our village life.

Since last year's AGM we have worked on the following:

- During the autumn of last year, we were able to train new volunteers for the Neighbourhood Speed Watch, and this spring we re-started regular patrols, which have been reinforced by Surrey Police. We still need more volunteers, especially for patrols around school starting and finishing times and for weekends to reinforce the message to drivers to keep to speed limits along the A25. In the last 12 months 689 vehicles have been reported by the WVA to Surrey Police for exceeding the speed limit through the village. Sadly, some of those have been recorded doing in excess of 50mph despite the clear visibility of the patrols. Overall, however, the random presence of the patrols has made drivers more aware, and, anecdotally, speeds through the village are generally coming down.
- Noise from motorbikes continues to be a problem. Nationally the issue has hit the headlines this spring with the Transport Secretary vowing to address the problem with new technology, but focused primarily in inner city locations; Surrey Police, however, have made the decision not to roll out that technology in the county. For the time being, therefore, we will continue to lobby our politicians, and mount speed watch patrols, where we can, on those sunny weekends and bank holidays which attract those determined to destroy the peace and quiet of our Surrey Hills.
- Planning Applications continue to be an important focus of our work. Most applications we review are well thought through and are modest additions to the housing stock in the village or modifications to individual homes. However, over the last 12 months, we have seen an increase in the number of applications which attempt to exploit potential loopholes in planning regulations and to build on the Green Belt surrounding the village. We will continue to challenge both the applicant and the Planning Department where in our view these proposals overstep boundaries.
- The Local Plan, and particularly the proposed Mill Way site in Westcott and those on the western edges of Dorking remain on our radar screen and we have formally submitted our concerns in writing at each consultation stage. If or when the Planning Inspector approves the Local Plan, we will monitor specific development plans and then ultimately any planning applications which are presented; our view is that these are likely to be a long way off coming to fruition.
- In late April 2022, we objected strongly to the Surrey County Council decision last year to allow access to Wolvens Lane to anything other than four wheeled vehicles, and have recently lodged another objection in which we seek to extend the ban to all

motor vehicles and motorbikes. Motor bikes are eroding and damaging the newly repaired surface of the Lane and the banks along the lane, and are both a danger and a noise nuisance to this quiet rural area and multi user route through the Surrey Hills. This second objection was supported by 97.2% of the 179 people who responded to our survey on the matter.

- We were delighted to be able to add a carol singing event around the Christmas Tree on the Green last December. Thanks go to the choir of Holy Trinity Church for leading the singing and to the Westcott 100 Club for supporting the event. Damage to the Green in erecting the tree means that we will need to think carefully about how and where the Christmas tree is sited this year.
- We are pleased that progress has been made in trying to secure the future of The Hut and The Reading Room Charities by creating one Charitable Incorporated Organisation with one set of Trustees. The final decision of the Charity Commission is awaited in respect of transferring the physical assets of both former charities, and work continues to seek a resolution to the question of the future of the Riverbank Surgery. Whilst we have no direct responsibility for this work, the WVA will continue to provide every support possible to the new entity in its efforts to retain vital community assets in the village.
- One of the most important pieces of work which the WVA has been engaged on this year is seeking to find ways to broaden the appeal of the Association to younger people and to encourage greater involvement from all residents in the work we do for the village. The Resolution to be put to the AGM on membership is unanimously supported by all WVA Committee members and we strongly believe is a way to create a more democratic and representative organisation committed to improving the lives of all the residents of Westcott. We urge all Members to attend the AGM and to vote in favour of the resolution.

Looking forward to the year ahead we will focus our efforts on concluding outstanding matters from projects we have worked on in the last year as well as the following:

- Supporting initiatives put forward by residents – like the Green Westcott community garden – by seeking to make use of the significant funds available through the Community Infrastructure Levy, generated from new housing developments like The Crown.
- Supporting the Surrey Hills All Saints Primary school to ensure that pupil numbers increase to levels which means that the future of the school is more assured after the closure of the Abinger site and the consolidation of teaching onto the Westcott site.
- Working on community projects particularly for the benefit of young people and young families.
- Monitoring the loss of retail outlets in the village and the impact that empty units have on the visual aesthetics of our village, and seeking ways to encourage new owners to move into these premises.
- Reviewing the membership of the Committee and ensuring that we have succession plans in place for the key officer positions.

My thanks go to all members of the WVA Committee past and present, for their support for me, for their tremendous hard work, and for continuing to find time in between their work and family commitments, to do things on your behalf. Volunteers like these are what make this community such a great place to live and work.

I support Edwin Harland's attached Financial Report which, in a very difficult year, shows that membership subscriptions and donations have held up reasonably well. This means that we continue to have funds with which to support worthwhile projects in the village.

My thanks also go to Hugh Parry for examining the 2021/22 Accounts and for agreeing to continue as the Independent Examiner for another year.

Tim Way

Chairman, Westcott Village Association

June 2022