



Minutes of the Open Meeting of the Westcott Village Association at Holy Trinity Church Wednesday 7th December 2022 from 7.30pm

Minutes are recorded by Agenda item number as follows:

1. Opening & Welcome: Chairman **Tim Way** opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and then confirming that this was his last Meeting as Chairman. As previously announced in the Village Magazine, he is standing down at the end of 2022.

Tim said the following:

'Firstly, I want to thank all members of the committee present and past who have worked with me in making some significant changes over the last five years. They do, and have done, a significant amount for the village.

Committee Members give their time voluntarily and without any form of compensation and do so largely unseen; I tend to be the one who gets thanked, but the reality is that they do a lot of the work to make things happen on your behalf. But it's also important to say that there is only so much the eight members of the Committee can do and the WVA works best with the involvement of other members of the community. As an example - On Saturday the Christmas tree was put up by four committee members but also four local residents. The sad thing is that those four residents don't live in the village.

Over the last five years we have tried to address most of the issues which residents firstly raised in the village questionnaire designed to inform the content of our Neighbourhood Development Plan as follows:

- Village Housing Development – focus for future development
- Green Belt protection issues – preserving Westcott as a separate community
- Traffic speeds and noise

Secondly, when I took on the Chairmanship you gave feedback on the way the WVA needed to function, that is

- Becoming more democratic
- Being more open
- Introducing a more modern constitution

With the exception of addressing noise pollution from motorbikes, the committee has made significant progress in tackling all these matters.

But our success has always been limited by the number of people who have been willing to serve as members of the Committee, as well as the number of residents willing to get actively involved in making things happen in their community.

I am very proud of what the Committee has achieved over the last five years, but it is time for them to have a new leader. I believe a Chairman only has a limited shelf life and staying too

long is a worse failing than handing over to an enthusiastic successor to continue the momentum.

The Committee can function for a time without a Chairman, but there is someone in this community who has the drive and the passion to take this role on for the next five years. Please don't wait too long before stepping forward.'

No one did or has to date.

2. Apologies: Apologies were received from James Friend, Simon Mabley and Alda Andreotti.

3. Updates from named Committee Members on three specific topics. The updates were framed by slides which can be accessed on the WVA website as follows.

<https://westcottvillage.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/WVA-Open-Meeting-presentation-combined-07-Dec-2022-v2.pdf>

Below is a digest of the key points made by the respective Committee Member together with comments and discussion that took place:

i) Planning Matters: James Leaver

- WVA is the organisation Mole Valley District Council consults on all planning applications in Westcott
- WVA responds to MVDC when necessary to ensure compliance with the Westcott Neighbourhood Development Plan and MVDC policy, whilst assisting residents with relevant concerns. Note a copy of the Development Plan is on the WVA website
- WVA will help and advise residents and developers if asked
- WVA is not against development but will support or object to applications when we believe it is right and consistent to do so
- WVA is not a 'neighbour dispute' resolution service and anyone thinking of submitting a planning application is urged to discuss it with their neighbours before submission
- All correspondence from, and representations made, by the WVA are published on the WVA website on a timely basis. The slides indicate the range of topics commented upon this year
- Significant effort has been expended by the WVA in the last two years in understanding and interpreting the MVDC Local Plan proposals and then making appropriate representations. Recently these related to the Inspector's Independent Examination of the draft Local Plan and very recent proposed changes to green belt status of land that might influence the outcome of the Examination. The Inspector's report and possible modifications to the proposed plan are expected sometime early in the 2023. See the website for copies of correspondence on this matter
- Potential CIL projects were outlined which are currently being assessed and considered for submitting to MVDC for funding. Sponsors have been nominated
- MVDC have confirmed that they are taking legal action against the owner of the former Cricketers public house for non compliance with the S215 Notice to complete repairs and maintenance of the building to a standard. The WVA will continue to keep a watching brief but can do no more in the meantime. Our objective remains to ensure the building is properly maintained and does not deteriorate to a point that it is beyond repair

Questions and comments arising on this subject included:

- a) A Resident asked why the 'imaginative plan' to remove the road next to the Cricketers and use it for parking in support of potential development of the building was not being supported. Tim Way replied that the road triangle is an important turning circle in the

village and Surrey County Council will not allow the road to be removed under any circumstances - so the idea is a non starter

- b) A Resident asked what if anything was happening with the two former shops, now still empty and whether they could be made available as houses or flats instead of commercial premises. James Leaver replied that he wasn't aware of any proposals and as they are private property there is nothing the WVA can do to force any particular course of action though as noted above the WVA is available to give advice and support where it is requested. James went on to note that the Westcott Neighbourhood Development Plan specifically included a policy to try to keep local shops open and trading which is contrary to any potential plan to convert the two empty shop premises to residential use. On a show of hands, the meeting was split roughly 50/50 on whether the change of use without the suggested six month consultation should be allowed or whether to retain the six months.

James confirmed that contrary to what the agent signs might indicate, the proposed café is not going ahead. Lack of parking is a key reason – see the Highways Section later in the minutes for a general discussion on Westcott vehicle parking.

A Resident did question whether all Westcott commercial businesses were worth protecting.

It is possible that the WVA will sponsor a further consultation on support or otherwise for Westcott shops and businesses and how it should influence Committee thinking.

- c) A Resident asked what the definition of affordable housing is in Westcott. Whilst Tim Way gave a short answer in the meeting referring to house prices, for the record the following is the verbatim description of 'Affordable Housing' on page 10 of the document dated June 2020 titled 'MVDC Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-2025'

'Affordable Housing includes social rented, affordable rented, affordable private rented and intermediate housing such as shared ownership and discounted home ownership, provided to specified, eligible households whose needs cannot be met by the market.

In other words, affordable housing is required to help those who do not have enough income or savings to buy or rent a home on the open market. Usually the development of affordable housing requires some form of public or private subsidy.'

Further detail is included in the 62 page document which is available on the MVDC website.

- d) Nick Lund confirmed that MVDC will clean and reinstate the sign showing '20 minute maximum waiting period' that is in front of the old Mace store / old Balchins Store that has been defaced. At this stage it is important to retain the current parking restriction in that space in case it encourages suitable replacement shops to open

ii) Membership: Sally Hewetson

- The WVA now formally embraces all Westcott Residents without conditions
- To fully participate, a financial contribution is not required – but it is very welcome
- Matters the WVA had influenced are listed in the slides including the recent and ongoing support for the Community Fridge
- What is needed is for all Villagers to try to contribute and be involved in village matters however that is achieved
- No comments were received from the floor

iii) Highways: Nick Lund

- WVA is investigating with other interested parties how Electric Vehicle charging points can be installed to be available for car owners without drives / access to a supply. This is in the early stages of discussion but Residents' views are welcome now – email the WVA on contact@westcottvillage.com
- WVA is investigating the potential for a Car Club – shared use of a car, parked centrally - to reduce, or at least curb further increases, in car ownership in Westcott. This is also in early stages of discussion but Residents' views are welcome now – email the WVA on contact@westcottvillage.com
- WVA is considering how / if parking spaces can be set aside near the retail premises so that customers would have somewhere to park and how a lack of parking is probably a deterrent in attracting new businesses
- Nick confirmed the application for double yellow lines at the top of Westcott Street – from the 'Westcott Street' sign to the A25 – to prevent dangerous parking will not be considered by Surrey County Council until August 2023. He reiterated that it is an application that the WVA Committee fully supports given the dangers that vehicles parked here impose on all other road users. It was first raised at the 2021 AGM
- An application for CIL monies is being submitted to replace the solar powered Vehicle Activated Speed sign on the A25 by Holy Trinity – it is old and not reliable – with a new one using a mains supply
- Speedwatch is in hibernation – but urgently needs to attract new volunteers in 2023. As pointed out by Hazel Watson, Speedwatch activity and data collection is the most immediate and cost effective way of alerting the Police to speeding in Westcott. The police use the data to communicate to offenders and also to determine how often and where to place their mobile speed traps. The seven volunteers are not enough to be effective – we need more to extend our coverage and give the authorities the data to help them contain vehicle speeds and so improve road safety. **Please volunteer. Find out what is involved by emailing contact@westcottvillage.com.**
- A new location for Speedwatch checks has been agreed by police on the A25 at the Balchins Lane junction. This is the first checkpoint outside the 30mph zone
- A Resident asked whether the Village Hall parking spaces could be made available for general use. On behalf of the Village Hall Trustees, Alan Reif confirmed there is no realistic possibility of this because the space is needed and reserved for Village Hall activities. He noted it only takes one or two badly parked vans to gridlock the whole Village Hall site.
- Other comments made from the floor about how parking provision might be improved included using parking meters, using the Wotton Estate land below the Church and resident permits – but with no real breakthrough solutions
- A Resident asked if average speed cameras could be installed along the A25 to deter and record speeding vehicles. Hazel Watson replied that the cost would be excessive and the effectiveness minimal given the multiple exit and entry points - so they are not under consideration
- A Resident noted that vehicles often did not stop at the Pedestrian Crossing to allow him to cross the road safely. Hazel Watson replied that little more could be done in addition what has already been done - installing the Pelican Crossing by the Crown and improving the beacons. It comes back to Speedwatch and Vehicle Activated Signs to persuade drivers to be more alert and to encourage them not to speed and to see / stop for the crossing. Nick commented that he is looking into marker posts being installed in the middle of the road on the two bends either side of the Furlong Road junction to deter speeding motorists and to keep them in their proper lane

4. To consider matters arising from the Minutes of the last Open Meeting on 10th March 2022 and the last AGM on 20th June 2022 not covered by the above updates:

No matters were raised in the Meeting arising from the Minutes that are not covered elsewhere.

5. Westcott Village Hall - status update:

Bernd Ratzke addressed the meeting and first summarised the events that led to the Reading Room / Hut merger to form the new Village Hall Trust that is now responsible for both sites. The objective now is to make decisions and make progress towards workable solutions for the two sites to benefit Westcott residents. To that end, he and James Leaver have agreed to continue to support the Trustees in pursuing this objective on condition that 1) a Project Manager with experience of these sorts of projects in the Charity sector is appointed for day to day work with 2) a small sub group of Trustees being nominated to work with the Project Manager and be allowed to make decisions to facilitate progress, as opposed to all Trustees needing to be consulted and involved. The Village Hall Trust Trustees have agreed to this, and Sally Hewetson and Helen Everett will join Bernd and James in the sub group. Next step is to make the appointment.

6. To discuss questions and consider comments raised by Residents not already covered during the Committee updates:

No questions were raised in advance of the meeting:

In addition to comments recorded elsewhere the following were raised:

i) A Resident asked for help in persuading SCC to cut back vegetation and clear debris restricting the pavement and making it unsafe to use from the Pedestrian lights to the top of the hill on the A25 towards Dorking. She had spoken to the Council but had seen no evidence of action. Nick and Jon Mears pointed out that both MVDC and Surrey County Council (this is an SCC matter) have an effective Problem Reporting Procedure via their respective websites with the links to both being already on the WVA website. Jon illustrated the effectiveness by describing how several problems he has reported have been resolved quickly with in one instance the council calling him to discuss the problem with him personally. Nick urged Residents to use the respective Council's Reporting Procedure as submitting the request for a solution in writing in this way creates a date stamped audit trail record as evidence.

After the meeting, PRG advised the Resident he would walk the pavement and submit a problem request to SCC too. If others can as well it will highlight the urgency with which Residents feel the work needs doing.

7. Any Other Business

i) **Parish Council:** Tim Way confirmed that whilst he was stepping down as Chairman, and once he had relinquished his Assistant Treasurer role at Holy Trinity, that, as outlined at the last AGM, he was still intending to lead a project looking at the feasibility and possibility of Westcott becoming a Parish Council. Paul Goddard has volunteered to help, but Tim asked for at least two or three other interested residents to come forward to help in the assessment process. **Anyone interested should please talk to Tim in the first instance.**

ii) **Speedwatch:** Paul Goddard asked Simon Coles if he could promote the Speedwatch programme at his school to attract some parent volunteers, confirming they only needed to spare a couple of hours a month to contribute to this tangible effort to improve road safety. Simon requested details and confirmed he would then promote the programme.

iii) **First Aid Training:** Richard Packer volunteered his time and expertise to organise and run First Aid Training courses in the New Year. This was well received by attendees and it is hoped such courses would be fully supported.

iv) **Beavers in Dorking** – Help needed. Edwin Harland had been requested to ask attendees if anyone would be prepared to give up circa an hour a week to help a local Beavers pack that will fold without this support. Please email contact@westcottvillage.com if you are interested and willing. **Post meeting, a volunteer has come forward which is great news!**

v) **Potential Westcott Village 2023 Coronation Party:** Jo Astor confirmed that she was in discussion with the WestFest Team to see if it is possible and acceptable for WestFest to be held on Coronation Weekend – that is 6th / 8th May 2023 – so that a Village Party can be incorporated. Failing this other options might be explored led by Jo and Sally Hewetson if there is sufficient interest amongst Westcott residents, and volunteers come forward to help organise.

Meeting Conclusion:

There being no further questions and no further business, Tim Way thanked residents for their support in attending the Meeting and expressing their views which help to form the basis of everything the WVA does on their behalf. He also thanked all members of the Committee for their time, effort and expertise in this, his final meeting as Chairman.

Formal thanks to the outgoing Chairman were said on behalf of the Committee by Paul Goddard, supported by favourable comment from the floor. Some 'retirement' gifts from the Committee were presented to Tim to mark our appreciation of the time, effort and energy he has put into the role – a true 'Friend of Westcott'.

The formal meeting closed at 21:15 after which refreshments were served and lively discussions continued. Thanks are due to Holy Trinity for the use of the church.

PRG 17th December 2022

Attendees: As noted on sign in sheet – some potential misspellings and omissions for which I apologise.

Residents: Ralph Sutton, Pam Wilson, Abhiram Magesh, John Moss, Jacki Moss, Andrew Lewis, Bernd Ratzke, Colin Pilbeam, Isolde Trenter, Roger Christian, Richard & Judith Packer, Andrea Gabb, Liz & Rob Potter, Leah Mursaleen-Plank, Elizabeth & Don Mair, Nancy Lund, Anthony & Jean Mickle, Ian Hughes, Iain Grainger, Fleur Subah-Symons, Graham Clark, Simon Coles, Alan Reif, Peter Hewetson, Angela Deloford, Helen Everett, Madeleine Brooks, Steve Brooks, Toby Balfre, Clive Jacques, Sarah Massey, Chris Dale, Parish Selman, Andrew & Edwina Gordon, Martin Finnis

WVA Committee: Tim Way, Edwin Harland, Paul Goddard, James Leaver, Jo Astor, Jon Mears, Sally Hewetson, Nick Lund

Councillors: Hazel Watson

Total Attendance including Committee Members was 50