

Notes of the Annual Parish virtual meeting held via Zoom on Wednesday 21st April 2021 at 8.00 pm

Present: Chairman James Stone (JS), vice-chairman Graeme Cook (GC), Cllr Cath Young (CY), Cllr Katy Wintour (KW), Cllr Lindsay Webster (LW), Cllr Vicky Webb (VW) *from 8.30pm* and Cathy Knott (clerk).

Invitees: Buckinghamshire Councillor Patrick Fealey

1. Chairman's welcome

Chairman James Stone welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the virtual meeting.

2. Apologies

All present.

3. Confirm the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 15th April 2020

The minutes were agreed and virtually signed.

4. To receive a report from Patrick Fealey, Buckinghamshire Council

Councillor Fealey gave a brief year end summary of the main areas of work in our area he has been involved with. Buckinghamshire Council became a unitary council one year ago and he said on the whole, the transition to a unitary has gone smoothly but there have been a few issues along the way which they are working through.

The planning department has been inundated with thousands of applications over the last year so is currently very slow. New changes to the constitution mean parish councils can now raise objections on applications rather than going through the ward member.

A lot of work has been put into HS2; we objected to the lorry route (which has gone to appeal) on the A422 due to concerns about the impact of increased large construction vehicle movements. The council will install mobile CCTV cameras in locations being used by HS2 construction traffic where we have the greatest concerns about road safety and the impact on our local communities.

We have set up Community Boards; a new way of bringing the council, groups, organisations and local people together to look at issues and find ways of improving them together. Over Christmas with the flooding issues, this enabled us to provide immediate help with equipment and funding to the community.

Councillor Fealey is standing again in the elections on 6th May and said it's been a pleasure working with Westbury Parish Council. James Stone, chairman thanked councillor Fealey for all his help over the past years and asked him to send our thanks to councillor Charlie Clare who won't be standing again.

5. Chairman's report and financial statement

James Stone, chairman

The last twelve months have been a challenge but the community has come together and a lot of good has come out of these unprecedented times and we are stronger as a consequence.

Thank you to all of you here for supporting the parish council, volunteering for various things – anything and everything! And pivotal to the council is Cathy our parish clerk who we thank for going above and beyond her role to support the whole community.

At the last annual parish meeting we welcomed Katy and Lindsay and said farewell to Mark. We are now saying farewell to Lindsay who is stepping down; thank you Lindsay for all your hard work – we wish you the best of luck with your ventures.

We now have two vacancies to fill as the parish council election was uncontested with five councillors approved to serve for another five years.

Reflecting back on what we have achieved over the last year, all during the Covid-19 pandemic is amazing; well done to everyone:

During 2020/21 we:

- Have been successful with funding from HS2 Community Fund for:
 - Permanent covered Pergola at the village hall (+ match funding from S106 17/02835/APP Land adjacent to Mill lane)
 - Tarmacking to back and side of Village Hall
 - Install basketball hoop and markings
 - Updating the historical trail booklet and installing a historic trail notice board
- Put the Neighbourhood Plan on hold until the VALP is published later this year
- Applied to the HS2 Road Safety fund for a pedestrian crossing on the A422 and a new vehicle activated sign on Buckingham Road
- Carried out a tree survey to identify all PC owned trees in the village with remedial works complete
- Made the village website more accessible
- Completed all phases of the streetlight replacement programme (although there are a couple we need to look at on a lower LED wattage)
- Refurbished the two notice boards
- Organised children's summer activities, Christmas trail and Easter trail
- Engaged with Buckinghamshire Council became involved with Community Boards
- Engaged with HS2, EKFB and Fusion to ensure we have as much information and support during the building up to and during the construction phased of the project
- Tackled dog poo – on ongoing issue.
- Pushed Bucks Highways to complete key outstanding tasks in and around the village

Financial Statement

The budget for this financial year is £755 less than the previous year as the tax base moved, so in January we made the decision to trim the budget, removing costs where we could and maintaining the Band D equivalent for the fifth year of no increase, in real terms, to the Parish Precept for Westbury.

Account balance at 31.03.2021 was £16,659.21. Income during the year included:

- Precept £18,481
- Wayleave payment £63
- Bank Interest £5
- HS2 fund £21,552 (for village projects)
- Grants from Bucks Council and Westbury Charity £1050 (to fund summer children's activities)
- VAT refunds £9,445

The main expenditure over the year included:

- Streetlight replacement (phase 3 & 4) £5370
- Electricity £1,159 (awaiting reimbursement)
- Mowing and hedge cutting £977
- Dog waste bin maintenance £443
- Play Park £150
- Clerk's salary £6,555
- General admin including PAYE services, donations, audit charges, printing, training, website costs, scribe accounting package, subscriptions and office expenses £3,495
- Insurance £1419
- Legal & professional £676
- Notice boards refurbishment £253
- Tree survey £410
- HS2/S106 projects £24,412
- Flags/bunting for VE Day £112
- Summer children's activities (part funded by Bucks Council & Westbury Charity) £1095

The accounts will be internally audited by John Marshal of NCALC on 26th April 2021 and will be made available to the public in June/July.

6. Councillor Reports

Councillor Cath Young **Neighbourhood Plan**

The initiative to generate a Neighbourhood Plan began back in Jan 2019. An application was made to AVDC to designate Westbury as a Neighbourhood Area in Spring 2019. After a period of public consultation, AVDC confirmed that the area was considered appropriate for designation as a Neighbourhood Area and formal notice of area designation was received.

In September 2019 O'Neil Homer were appointed as external consultants for the process and the application of a grant for £8500 from Locality/Groundwork UK was successful. Progress was made in the following key areas: -

- A copy of the boundary plan was received from AVDC
- A draft Vision Note was prepared by O'Neil Homer.
- Data was gathered around the key areas of Historic Environmental Records, Beachborough School future plans, Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan.
- A call for sites was undertaken and a draft Plan of Land Availability developed.
- A screening opinion request letter was sent to AVDC, their response indicated the need for a Strategic Environment Assessment as development sites were identified.
- A Mapping Licence/Map Base were purchased
- A review of key information including as housing stock, traffic issues, design and environment considerations was undertaken.
- A village breakfast for further community engagement was planned and flyers circulated.
- A final draft of the Vision Note was made publicly available and sent to AVDC March 2020.

In mid-March 2020, due to Coronavirus restrictions, further planning meetings and the village breakfast were postponed. Unspent funds were also returned to Groundwork at the end of the financial year.

As the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and WPC reviewed the progress of the project, the need for more representation from villagers on the planning group was evident. A call for volunteers resulted in five villagers expressing an interest to get involved in the Neighbourhood Plan. However, in October 2020 it was agreed that the project should be put on hold until April 2021 whilst the energies of WPC were put into other priority projects.

Once the project resumes, the impact of government changes in planning system, Buckinghamshire Local Plan and VALP will need consideration in relation to Westbury Neighbourhood Plan. Applications for further grants and funds from Locality and MHCLG to support the ongoing development of the Plan will also be required at the outset.

Councillor Katy Wintour **Playpark, Social Media and Internal controls**

I am responsible for both the Playpark, Internal Controls and management of the Westbury Village Facebook page & group.

The Playpark reopened in July 2020 following government guidelines. We performed a Covid risk assessment on the playpark and also installed a hand sanitiser at the gate. The playpark has continued to be checked once a month to ensure equipment is working and is safe for use. There are plans to replace both the park bench and the bin in the near future as there has been an increase in visitors to the park since the success of the Westbury Shop & Café. We have also replaced the notice board this year which has been put up the fence at the front of the park.

The recent inspection report received showed no red or amber flags but did detail a few areas which need looking at such as some equipment showing signs of wear, moss/algae growth on some surfaces and repair work needed some equipment/fences. We are currently working on a plan so that we can get these points actioned to ensure the playpark continues to be safe for use.

The Westbury Village Facebook Page & Group continues to be a great platform for communication between the villagers but also more recently for local business advertisement. In March and April 2021, the page saw an increase of 531% in post reach and 304% in post engagement. We have also continued to support Westbury Village Shop and Café through liking and sharing their posts.

I have continued to act as Internal Controller by carrying out the quarterly financial control checks

Councillor Lindsay Webster
HS2

Since being assigned to HS2, unfortunately due to the impact of the Coronavirus residents meetings have not been able to go ahead. Various online meetings have been held for Parish Councillors to gain updates on the works being undertaken by EKFB and Fusion, which has been made available on the Westbury village website.

Main works activity has continued in the Westbury area with early activities such as ground investigations, habitat surveys and localised vegetation removal carried out by EKFB. Activities will begin for the construction of the new access and haul roads which are internal roads designed to move construction traffic up and down the line of the railway to reduce traffic off the local road network as much as possible. Local traffic management including footpath and road closures or diversions will be put in place to enable the work to be carried out safely and these details will be shared with Parishioners once they have been finalised.

Work is increasing at the A422 Brackley Road Compound site with a secondary EKFB compound on the northern side of the road which will manage the main construction activities during the construction phase. Recent activity here has involved the delivery of cabins, and the creation of a trackway within the site.

Further steps have been taken to reduce HGV traffic by use of rail, to deliver 150,000 tonnes of aggregate for use around the Calvert Railhead. This has already removed the equivalent of 7,500 HGV's off local roads and cut 24,000 tonnes of carbon emissions. Across the whole project, 15,000 freight trains are set to haul 10 million tonnes of aggregate to construction sites. A section of disused railway is being brought back to use as part of the East-West rail project which is set to link Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford, Aylesbury and Cambridge.

We are advised that from summer 2021, work is planned for the temporary diversion of the A422 to the south. The Parish Council will continue to communicate these works over the next few months to keep Parishioners informed as details are finalised.

In wider news, to date EKFB have trained over 500 construction candidates in partnership with various training providers, including the Bucks College Group. For information on careers and local job vacancies, visit EKFB.com/careers. They are also planning a range of exciting STEM activities which will launch in the next academic year when restrictions are eased.

The TimeBank initiative, where EKFB staff are encouraged to do one day of volunteering per year has been launched and they are seeking volunteering or community investment suggestions, whether it be a spot of gardening or a careers talk so if you have any ideas please get in touch via the Parish Council.

Vice-Chairman Graeme Cook
Highways & Utilities

Highways

Just before Christmas I walked around the village with Paul Foot (TfB) to highlight areas needing attention. We are still waiting for the following to be actioned:

- Drains on main street blocked and over flowing down Mill Lane.
- Advice about traffic flow around the village and how the entrance/exits of Beachborough can be improved.
- School sign on Main Street badly faded and needed replacing well over a year ago.
- Orchard Place to Main Street junction pot holes round the cobbles at the junction.
- Two loose/cracked round man holes on Biddlesden road.
- The pile of soil against the fence outside the church was the waste left by the drain engineers over a year ago.

Recently actioned:

- Biddlesden Road divots repaired.
- Brackley Road retexturing works complete.
- The chairman, James Stone met with Tracey Gascoigne, Estates Coordinator at Beachborough School earlier this year to discuss traffic flow and congestion around the village. The school has widened the entrance to

Mill Lane carpark which will hopefully help with the traffic flow at the bottom of Mill Lane and they are investigating options to help ease the flow of traffic around the school.

- We have applied to HS2 Road Safety fund for a pedestrian crossing and vehicle activated sign on the A422.

Utilities

Last summer we completed phase 3 & 4 of our streetlight replacement programme.

Our move to LED lighting throughout the village has a positive impact on the environment whilst saving us money. Western Power Distribution (WPD) are currently updating our information so that we can apply for a backdated refund with Opus for electricity saved since the replacements.

Councillor Vicky Webb

Footpaths

General:

The footpaths have been extremely well used over the past year and it is wonderful to know that they have provided a form of levelling for so many villagers in need to get out, have fresh air and escape the confines of home. We are blessed having so many lovely walks. Do please remember to keep your dogs under control with the lambing season still in full flow and the young calves out with the cows:

The increased walking has led to some increased feedback with a reoccurring theme being the difficulty in tackling stiles, or rickety gates. Over the coming year we shall make an effort working with landowners to improve access starting with replacing the gate from the Churchyard onto the path that leads to the fields. If you have an old gate lying around do let us know as we can recycle them leading to better path access for older people and dogs.

We have updated and republished Westbury History Trail that takes you to all the woodcarvings across the village and tells our history. You can pick up your trail leaflet for free from the Shop and Café.

Footpath claim case:

The final part of the footpath claim submitted over 10 years ago now has stalled in the last year due to Covid-19. It has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for a hearing but they are likely to be holding out for a live enquiry session in the village rather than a virtual one. In preparation we are looking at preparing statements from witnesses later this summer, so if you submitted an evidence form ten years ago, we shall make contact with you to prepare for a hearing.

Planning report

This year we have seen a number of applications approved within the parish including:

- erection of a new building and extension at Manor farm
- consideration of a conversion of an agricultural building into two dwellings at Field Barn Farm, Fulwell Road
- erection of two dwellings at Mill Farm

Outstanding applications include a second round of consultation for the proposal to erect 7 dwellings and associated works at land off Biddlesden Road (in June last year) which the parish council objected to

7. Open forum for questions

No members of the public present.

Village reports can be viewed on the village website at: <https://westburyvillage.co.uk/annual-parish-meetings/>

The meeting closed at 8.40pm