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Notes of the Annual Parish meeting held at Westbury Village Hall on Wednesday 12th April 2023

Present: Chairman James Stone (JS), Cllr Graeme Cook (GC), Cllr Katy Wintour (KW), cllr Pierre Jeannes (PJ), cllr James Watson (JW), cllr Jonathan Newman (JN), Cathy Knott (clerk) and one member of the public.
Attendees from Buckinghamshire Council: Robin Stuchbury, Caroline Cornell and Patrick Fealey

Apologies

cllr Richard Tredwell (RT)

Confirm the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13th April 2022

The minutes were agreed and signed.

Chairman's welcome

Chairman James Stone welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending, explaining that this year we decided to hold a brief meeting and ask for local reports to be submitted which could be read on the village website.

We have a full team of councillors again after saying farewell to Cath Young and Vicky Webb and recently welcoming James Watson and Jonathan Newman.

Taking a quick look back over the year, we have achieved the following:

- Three footpaths in Oxfordshire (Mixbury Footpath Nos. 30, 31 and 32) were confirmed as public rights of way after 12 years of lobbying.
- We tarmacked the back and side areas of the village hall and created a much larger area for parking.
- We successfully applied to install a Puffin crossing on the A422 (using the HS2 Road Safety Fund). This will be installed over the next few months.
- We created a neighbourhood plan steering group to future proof our village and we have secured funding for professional help including consultants and technical support.
- We have lobbied Buckinghamshire Council over planning issues and concerns.
- We created a working party to put on a community event to celebrate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
- We purchased our own speed watch kit and signage to help with traffic calming.

We continue to:

- Lobby Buckinghamshire Council over the state of the roads and poor drainage.
- Liaise closely with HS2 and circulate information on road and path diversions/closures.

Future projects:

- We are making the playpark safer by installing a new safety gate and replacing the worn-out fencing.
- We will be installing solar panels on the village hall roof to help with utility costs at the shop and village hall after securing funding via the HS2 community environment fund and WPHC.
- We are working towards creating an active speed watch team.
- We continue to investigate better broadband connection.

Expenditure over the last year included the following:

- £20,785 (HS2 funding) to tarmac the back and side area of the village hall
- £10,910 Neighbourhood Plan expenses (10K of which was funded by a grant)
- £1,103 on Speed Watch kit and signage (funded by Westbury Parish Hall Charity)
- £3,255 on drainage - Playing Field Road
- £1,645 on a new gate and benches at the playpark (which will be funded via Section 106)
- £7,056 on clerk's salary
- £3,256 on admin costs (insurance, subscriptions, training, audit, website etc)
- £620 on street light electricity
- £470 on dog bin maintenance
- £1,133 on mowing, hedging and tree maintenance
- £1,419 on children's activities (part funded by Westbury Parish Hall Charity)
- £2,494 on community events (part funded by Westbury Parish Hall Charity)

Income over the last year included the following:

- £18,794 Buckinghamshire Council Precept
- £10,000 Neighbourhood Plan grant
- £19,022 HS2 Community environment fund
- £2998 grants from Westbury Parish Hall Charity
- £88 Wayleave payments

Village reports

Westbury Shop & Café

Westbury Community Shop and Café (WCSC) has continued to thrive over the past year. The shop serves the community by providing everyday goods, local fresh produce in season and an outlet for local businesses and crafts. Friday night takeaways have continued to be popular and the shop's catering services have expanded over the last year to include parties and village social occasions in the Village Hall, takeaway lunches for local businesses, several funeral wakes, and boxed breakfasts for a local wedding venue. Barbecues have also been popular especially over the summer months, and seasonal goods such as Christmas hampers and veg boxes sold well. While sales have held up over the year as a whole, costs continue to rise and we do not foresee a profit for the financial year 2022-3.

The staff team, who are responsible for the day to day running of the business, have created a shop and café which now attracts people from surrounding towns and villages as well as Westbury itself. It is very popular with cyclists and walkers, and its proximity to the playground and playing field make it a popular destination for families. It also continues to benefit from sales to players and spectators at the cricket and football matches on the playing field. In October 2022 the shop opened its doors to welcome customers inside after the restrictions of Covid. This also meant rearranging the interior to allow for sufficient storage. This was a popular move and helped to increase sales.

We have a stable and excellent staff team of five, supplemented by youngsters at the weekends. Mel, Helen, Remy, Louise and Norma have created a venue which is notable for its friendliness and welcome to everyone. Adult volunteers complement the team, and those we have are invaluable. However, with the long hours that the shop is open and the demands of both shop and kitchen, more volunteers are needed to support the team. In spite of increasing footfall and an excellent local reputation there have been challenges this year which are likely to continue. Storage continues to be difficult. We are grateful to the village hall for allowing us to use the empty changing rooms over the winter, but we are struggling to find a permanent solution. The cost of electricity has risen rapidly, staff costs are increasing steeply, and VAT has risen in the year. While prices have had to rise, the team are doing all they can to keep them as low as possible.

The Management Committee has welcomed Kirsty Bremner and Clare Thomas during the last year. The Chair and Secretary, who have held these positions for eight years, are standing down in October. While plans are well under way for this transition, we would welcome interest, especially from Westbury residents, in joining the committee.

Sue Lucas, Chair and John Heal, Secretary

Westbury Parish Hall Charity (WPHC)

Westbury Parish Hall Charity was set up when the new Village Hall was built in 2016. Its role is to oversee the running of the Hall as landlord, the ownership of the Hall is The Parish Council. It receives regular reports from both WCSC (Westbury Community Shop & Café) and WVHA (Westbury Village Hall Association) and supports both entities in their respective roles. It receives rent from both WCSC and WVHA and as a charity supports different projects that benefit Westbury Village Hall, users of Village Amenities or residents of the Parish. Grant application forms are available on the village website or through the Parish Clerk. A list of grants approved are at the end of this report.

Regular joint meetings with WCSC and WVHA are held to ensure that they are supported by the charity where needed. WPHC also ensures all appropriate insurances and safety certificates are in place.

2022/23

The committee consists of Cathy Knott, James Stone, Ian Wakeford, Ellen Watson and Sue Barrett. All are residents within Westbury Village.

April 2022	Westbury Parish Council	Community speed watch kit and mph signs	564.96
May 2022	Westbury Parish Council	Play around the Parishes (2x sessions over summer)	950.00
June 2022	Jubilee Committee	Tug of war rope for village events	159.90
June 2022	Westbury Parish Council	Climbing wall for Jubilee event	625.00
June 2022	Westbury Parish Council	Speed Watch signage (CSW yellow reflective)	538.18
Oct 2022	Beachborough	Halloween Walk	200.00
Oct 2022	Westbury Parish Council	Christmas tree	320.00

Approved Grants outstanding:

- £1000 - Church mower
- £2000 – towards a bigger carpark at the village hall
- £5000 – match funding towards solar panels at the village hall (agreed via email March 23)

Sue Barrett (Chair)

Westbury Wilds

For newcomers to the village, Westbury Wilds is an old woodland covering about 20 acres, held in trust for the residents of Westbury. This wood lies about half a mile north of the village towards Biddlesden, on the left -hand side.

The origins stem back to before the Enclosure Act of 1764, an extract of which is painted on a board which resides in the belfry of our Church St. Augustine's. There are five Trustees. The Chair being our Rector, the Reverend Paula Smith.

The Trust has two functions:

- To keep the woodland in a semi wild environment, offering lovely walks.
- The collection of fallen wood to which every villager is entitled.

This wood can only be accessed on foot or horseback. We are due for a Trustees walk when the weather warms up. Jacky Owen, Trustee

Beachborough School

Beachborough School continues to flourish in the village of Westbury. With a pupil roll of up to 400 pupils, Beachborough remains one of the most successful standalone Preparatory Schools in the region.

Uniquely, in this area, Beachborough is not owned by, or affiliated to, any one Senior School. As a non-profit making charitable trust, Beachborough remains highly attractive to families that are looking for a truly independent education, where its pupils can seamlessly move on to any Senior School in the UK.

Despite the current economic climate, the school remains very popular, with waiting lists for spaces in many key year groups. The Nursery and Kindergarten, that welcomes children from the age of 2½, is particularly popular. The school has continued to develop its teaching and outdoor learning approach for its younger learners and children joining the Nursery now have access to specialist Games, PE, Music and Technology teaching provision, whilst also enjoying the seven areas of learning in the EYFS curriculum.

The school has invested in many areas of the school, to enhance the offer and provision available. These have included the addition of new paths in the grounds, ongoing improvements in Information Technology and a new digital music composition suite for the music department. In the summer, the refurbishment of the Food Technology suite will take place as all pupils from, 2½ to 13, cook on a weekly basis. Improvements in sport, including new cricket nets and a new cricket pavilion are also planned.

Beachborough launched a brand new and exciting curriculum module this year, for our oldest pupils in Years Seven and Eight. Our CEL Programme (Character, Ethics and Leadership) programme is now an embedded part of our Key Stage Three curriculum and enables our oldest learners to build and develop extensive life skills, alongside the main curriculum. Prospective families with children in Year Six, that are coming to the end of their Primary schooling and are looking for a 'bridge' into Secondary school, are joining us for our final two years in Years Seven and Eight. That is very exciting indeed.

Beachborough has continued to build and enhance strong links and relationships with the local community. Beachborough's CTI Programme (Creative Technology Innovation) programme continues to be a tremendous success and supports a wide number of Primary schools in the region. This year, we have completed a Robotics CTI Day for over 150 Year Six pupils from six regional state schools (including Finmere, Helmdon, Buckingham and Radstone Primary schools) and will complete a Bike Technology CTI Programme for the equivalent number of Year Five children.

Beachborough continues to provide and share its resources with our local state schools and the village. Beachborough remains very supportive of the village, and we are delighted to help our local community in any way we can. The school continues to support the life of Westbury Village Church and the children and staff team have helped in the upkeep of this very special part of the village. In addition to that, the school is running a growing number of activities for the village residents and children to take part in. A wonderful example this year was the school's Halloween fun afternoon in the school woods; hosted on a Saturday afternoon, the village families and their children were warmly invited to attend. As COVID 19 eases, the school continues to look at further ways it can help and support the local community and we look forward to working with the Parish Council on these in due course.

On a personal note, this will be my last report as Headmaster of Beachborough School. As the eighth Headmaster of this wonderful school, my family and I are moving on to a new adventure in Hertfordshire at the end of the academic year. I will be starting a new chapter as Headmaster of Beechwood Park School in September 2023. Westbury Village has been our home, as well as our place of work, and we have enjoyed every minute of it. Westbury has a wonderful community spirit, and I would like to thank everyone in the village for making me and my family feel so welcome. Beachborough School is proud to be part of Westbury Village and the tremendous people that live here. Beachborough School is thriving, it passed its educational quality inspection in 2018 with a rating of, 'excellent in all areas' and it was recently re-inspected for compliance in September 2023 and passed in all areas with no action points.

Westbury Village is also thriving, and I therefore wish Beachborough School and Westbury Village continued happiness as they work together to support the local community and beyond.

Christian Pritchard – April 2023
Headmaster – Beachborough School

SugaRich

As with many businesses, just when we thought we may be in for a calmer time after leaving behind the issues caused by Covid, instability in the energy and commodity markets caused because of the situation in Ukraine, has brought about a number of challenges which we have had to work hard to overcome in the last 12 months.

Despite the uncertainty, again we are extremely proud of the way of our staff have risen to these challenges and we are pleased to report that we have had another successful year which has seen us expand with our first acquisition outside of the UK.

SugaRich recovers surplus materials from foods surplus to requirements or out-of-date and turns it into nutritionally balanced, high performance animal feed ingredients that are environmentally friendly and cost effective. This form of up-cycling helps prevent unwanted food finding its way into landfills. You can find out more here:

<https://www.sugarich.co.uk/>

Buckinghamshire Council

Roads and potholes – Buckinghamshire Council has released some extra monies from funds to help with the potholes and road surfaces (on top of the £100 million already allocated for these repairs). This is not just a problem unique to us but it is very frustrating for everyone. Please bear with us whilst we work on this.

The gullies are being cleared again this year and there are 85,000 in the county so not a quick task!

We have new road contractors who started work on the 1st April 2023 - an auspicious date? They are Balfour Beatty Living Paces and Atkins who come under the umbrella of Buckinghamshire Highways. They also bring with them a new potholing machine which will also help in the pothole fight.

Please continue to use <https://fixmystreet.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/> and

<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/street-cleaning/> to report problems.

I am proud of the fact that our education here in the North of the County is absolutely superlative and we have some excellent schools and teachers with families moving to this area to take advantage of this! Brilliant!

Also, just a reminder that there is help for all those struggling with rising prices. There are now several options for anyone struggling to pay their Council Tax bills and the Council is encouraging people to sign up for Customer Access online. This provides people with 24/7 access to manage their accounts. There is also Helping Hands, and they can be contacted by using the online form or ringing 01296 531151. If it is very urgent then you can call 0800 999 7677. Looking forward to continuing working with you.

Councillor Caroline Cornell

Buckingham West

The meeting closed at 7.45pm