

ANNUAL REPORTS FOR WEST WICKHAM PARISH MEETING 3RD JUNE 2019

Chairman's Report to the West Wickham Annual Parish Meeting 2019.

I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors for the time and effort that they give so generously to the West Wickham Parish. Allen Hazelhurst generously agreed to be co-opted to serve on the Parish Council. Many different meetings are attended by the Parish Councillors on your behalf, Balsham Ward Forum, A1307 Parishes Forum, Village Hall Committee, Neighbourhood Watch, Police liaison and various planning meetings to name but a few.

Our Neighbourhood Plan has been progressing well under the new chair of the working group Dave Sargeant, but as yet not completed. The importance of having an adopted plan would still appear to be essential with regards to how much weight is given to the Parish's views on planning applications. I would also like to thank Trevor Hall, the previous chair, and all those on the working group who have given their time so freely for the good of the Parish.

Speeding within the Parish and the surrounding area is still a major concern to many, the speed indicators we believe are having an impact and the data enables us to highlight to the relevant parties where the biggest issues occur, namely entering Streetly End from Horseheath. Our Speedwatch team have also been out and about helping to drive down the speed in the Parish. Please could I appeal to all those living within the Parish to set a personal example, as I have seen quite a few locals going through at pace!

South Cambridgeshire planning Department still continues to perplex me on how they work and arrive at some of their decisions. It is important that if you have any strong feelings about any planning issue that you fill in the relevant form online, a neighbour's feedback holds more weight than the Parish Council feeding back the neighbour's concerns. Councillor Geoff Harvey has been very helpful in liaising with the planning department on our behalf.

The A1307 Strategy Board's proposed new route is still a live 'threat' to the Parish, with an application submitted by the Board for more funding to look further at the feasibility of the new route. Georgina Magin chairs the working group that monitors all things A1307, and she and her team have done a sterling job of making sure that we are all up to date with everything that is going on. I'm pleased to say that after representation to our MP Lucy Frazer, Councillor Geoff Harvey is now invited to attend the Strategy Board meetings as an observer

The West Wickham Pub Hub continues to be popular and I'd like to thank all those involved, especially, Nicci and Ian Trudgeon, Di Licence, Alex Schuilenburg and The Chestnut Tree pub. It's a great way to get to know the local community and support local charities.

The Village Voice is supported by your Parish Council and it is an excellent resource for all. Thank you to the editors Andrew Morris and Sue Thurston along with all other contributors.

Our Parish website is also great for information westwickham.org, as is signing up to the resident's email group.

As a Council, we continue to set the precept at around £65 per household, currently this should give us an annual surplus to allow for the unexpected and with the knowledge that

more financial burdens will continue to be passed down towards Parish Councils. Your Parish council meets six times during the year.

Jenny Richards our Parish Clerk has done another year's sterling work on behalf of West Wickham and we are truly grateful for her experience and professionalism.

Patrick Charlton

Chair West Wickham Parish Council

28th May 2019

West Wickham & District Gardening Club

Report for the Annual Parish Meeting, 3rd June 2019, for the twelve months to 30th April 2019.

The Club's year began once again in May 2018 with the Annual Plant Sale, which was most successful. We knew that we could not hope to match the "astonishing" [the Treasurer's word] sum raised at the 2017 Sale, but the takings were in line with the 2015 and 2016 years and once again made a most valuable contribution to the Club's finances – as well as to the richness of local gardens! An even more important aspect of the summer was the successful return in August of the Annual Show (which had been rested during 2017). Despite a horticulturally challenging year weatherwise, a revitalised Show sub-committee organised a very well supported Show, which included a rejuvenated Photography section – judged by Ronnie Temple, an enthusiastic new resident of the village.

Between the Sale and the Show, the Club's members as usual enjoyed a number of visits to gardens of interest, all arranged by our excellent Programme Secretary, Rosemary Yallop. Two of these visits were to local gardens of interest, on Monday evenings: the first to the classic English garden of Marian Corbett in Cardinal's Green, and the second to the fascinating bonsai garden of Sally Harris in Castle Camps. The third visit involved an all-day coach trip (shared with the Balsham garden club) first to Place for Plants and then to R.H.S. Hyde Hall – again two quite different gardens and a very successful event.

It is nevertheless during the autumn, winter and spring months that the Club is at its most active, with its monthly Monday evening talks and presentations, and this year was no exception. The presentations have ranged from the distinctly practical (a talk on composting by our local supplier, Field Compost), through introductions to a range of different plants and to particular gardens (Ickworth) and garden residents (birds), to the seasonally light-hearted (creating horticultural Christmas decorations). These meetings always included refreshments, and sometimes plants were available at them for purchase. Attendance has remained healthy, and once again our Programme Secretary is to be congratulated.

Members of the Club continue to benefit from our arrangement with a major seed supplier for the centralised purchase of seed at a considerably reduced price, and we remain grateful to our Trading Secretary, Marian Corbett, for handling this operation. Members continue to benefit from the advice and information which is circulated in our occasional *Newsletter*, which is produced by Janet Morris. Janet also continues, on behalf of the Gardening Club, to maintain the strip of garden along the front of the Village Hall, from which we all benefit.

The Club's income continues to come from members' subscriptions, the Plant Sale, and the Christmas Raffle (for which the prize is Gift Tokens from Beeches Nursery in Ashdon), and the main expenditure is on the payment of speakers and for the hire of the Village Hall. We remain very fortunate that all our financial arrangements continue under the careful management of our excellent Treasurer, Andrew Morris – who also chairs the above-mentioned Show sub-committee. It is very satisfactory to report that the Club this year has 41 members, its largest membership for a number of years.

Arthur Mawby,

26th May 2019

Chairman.

WEST WICKHAM & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY CLUB

The Club has had a full programme of lectures during the year on subjects ranging from photos of Haverhill in the past to the work of the Museum of Cambridge (formerly the Folk Museum) and the life of John de Fraine, temperance lecturer and first Chairman of West Wickham Parish Council. Money was raised to fund pottery analysis from our community archaeology project and the final report is in the process of being written. A booklet about the men on the war memorial who died in the First World War was produced with financial support from the Parish Council.

Like many village institutions, the Club (founded in 1984) is suffering from lack of support and may not continue for long. It is difficult to book (and pay for) speakers when numbers are low and without an interesting programme it is difficult to attract new members. A more transient village population is seemingly not interested in the village's past (although quite happy to draw on our work when putting in a planning application or selling their house). Various village surveys have shown that people value their environment and its rural nature but you can only protect and enhance this by understanding how it came about in the first place.

The Club would welcome the support of the Parish Council for the Club by promoting the value of knowing about the history of the village and the surrounding area and by encouraging interest in the Club's activities.

Janet Morris, Secretary

WEST WICKHAM CARPET BOWLS CLUB

Illness has depleted Club membership over the year and we are at an all time low in numbers. This means we are struggling to remain viable. Carpet bowls is a very sociable game which can be played by all, whatever the age or ability. Evenings consist of very friendly competition amongst ourselves with the opportunity to play other local Clubs in friendly matches both at home and away. We have had a full programme of these over the year playing clubs from Haverhill, Ashdon, Castle Camps and Helions Bumpstead with mixed success but always enjoyable.

Again the Club would welcome Parish Council support in the promotion of the Club as an ideal way to meet and make friends with your neighbours and those from other villages.

Janet Morris, Secretary

Annual Parish Report April 2019

District Council

In May, it will have been a year since we were elected as members to South Cambridgeshire District Council and the control of the council shifted from Conservative to Liberal Democrat. So, what has the Liberal Democrat-led South Cambs Council been up to in the last year?

Governance

The Liberal Democrats won control of the Council in May 2018 and is now a 30-strong group (previously 14). There are 11 Conservatives, 2 Independents, 2 Labour. In a spirit of co-operation, we appointed an Independent Councillor as Council Chairman, and for good governance, appointed a Conservative as Chairman of the important Scrutiny and Overview Committee. A 7-strong cabinet is made up of 4 women and 3 men.

New Business Plan

Following a public consultation, a new Business Plan covering the period 2019 to 2024 has been published, which changes the direction of the Council. We are committed to providing homes that are truly affordable for everyone to live in; to help local businesses to grow; to be green to our core and to put customers at the centre of everything we do as a modern and caring council. Check out the new Business Plan at: www.scambs.gov.uk/businessplan

Re-organising the Council

It became clear in putting together the new Business Plan that the departmental structure of the council would struggle to deliver on our priorities. Furthermore, studies of other district councils showed that South Cambridgeshire had fallen behind in the use of new technology and working practices essential to run a modern council. Management consultants were commissioned to carry out a review of the council and to recommend what would need to change to improve business delivery and it was made clear to the consultants that business improvement was their brief, not cost-cutting.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

For most of the first year in control of the council, we had to work with the budget set by the previous Conservative-led administration. The council has recently approved the budget for 2019-20, which sets the priorities for the Lib Dem administration. The council no longer receives central government grants and the amount by which the amount of Council Tax the council can raise is also capped by the government.

Our five-year financial plan has been altered to deliver more income from investments and commercialisation with the aim of having 25% of £20 million income coming from these

sources by 2024. The previous administration's plans were to reduce general reserves to less than £3 million by 2023 while we are aiming for reserves of £4.5 million by then. An inherited budget shortfall of £0.5 million has already been turned into a £1 million surplus which has gone into the General Reserve to help prepare for future uncertainties

'Green to our core'

Our administration has pledged to become a zero-carbon district by 2050. A working group of members and officers is preparing a high-level business case for a set of energy conservation measures (such as EV charging points, solar panels over our car park and on our waste depot). We intend that our Cambourne offices will be a showcase for a Zero Carbon Council and an exemplar to our residents.

A council with a heart

Our administration is determined to find homes in our district for 5 refugee families fleeing warfare in the middle east. The Home Office previously asked the council to help with the rehoming of refugees and two years ago, the then minority Lib Dem Group, put a motion to Council proposing this but it was voted down by the majority Conservative Group. The current Home Office scheme runs until December 2019, and we hope to be able to provide homes for these 5 families by then.

Council grants

The committee that administers council grants has been refocused to make it more responsive to a range of needs and interests across the district. We have put more money into the mobile warden scheme this year and another increase is promised next year. We have initiated a piece of work to look at extending the scheme across the whole district and commissioned a similar piece of work on community transport.

Our first year in headlines

Given more money for mobile warden schemes

Increased Council Tax for empty homes

Supported local businesses to get council work

Engaged with local business on Brexit preparedness

Tailored the Localised Council Tax Scheme for Universal Credit

Offered homes for five Syrian refugee families

Sold land for self-build

Identified sites for more new council houses

Produced a new homelessness strategy

Made available a 3-year £400,000 fund for community groups

Published a new tool kit for loneliness

Commenced the preparation of a new joint Local Plan with Cambridge City

County Council

Shire Hall

In an attempt to save money and move out of the expensive Shire Hall, the County Council made the decision to begin the process of relocating their offices to Alconbury. This is still some years down the line, but is definitely happening, the design is being finalised and a contractor to carry out the construction has been selected. This isn't great news for people wanting to visit the offices, as it's a lot further away from us and not accessible by public transport. The cost of the new HQ ballooned when the council realised it had budgeted for a 2 acre site when it needed a 4 acre site.

Computer Charges

After a year of having a charge implemented for usage of computers in County Council run libraries, the Council only made 1/9 of their estimated profit, with usage dropping by 1/3. Given these stats, they have reneged on the idea, and computer usage in libraries is now free for all again.

A1307

We've finally seen some work this year, the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP), who are the body facilitating the major changes to the road, not the Highways department, are starting spending some money on alterations. We've see the beginning of the bus lane going into Linton from Abington, we've also had minor changes to the traffic lights at LVC and more bicycle racks at the Babraham Road Park & Ride site. The local engagement process will begin again soon, with the GCP seeking local opinion on larger scale elements, such as a new roundabout at Bartlow Road, Linton, upgrading the Dean Road junction, a new Park and Ride site location, locations of new cycle routes and proposed changes to traffic light systems in Linton and Hildersham. Keep your eyes on our monthly reports as we will be updating on this as things happen.

Funding

The County Council's financial problems persist with warnings of 'stark and unpalatable' choices ahead. They have raised council tax by the maximum allowed, 4.99% to help with this. They have budgeted for £8.8million income from commercial services this year, but is predicted to only make a quarter of that.

More positive news is that central government decided not to levy over £7million of 'negative revenue support grant' on the council (instead of paying the council a grant to help deliver services, the government was planning to charge the council).

West Wickham Village Hall

Report to Parish Council

1st June 2019

Bookings

The village hall is used regularly by groups and clubs from both within and outside of West Wickham, for a range of activities including sport, pastimes, hobbies and socializing and village meetings.

Daisy Chains preschool (<http://www.daisychainspreschool.co.uk>) is the most frequent user of the hall. The pre-school celebrated their 40th Anniversary in 2018 but now finds their finances are precarious. To help in balancing the books the Committee has decided to continue to apply a discretionary 25% discount. However, despite this the current occupancy rate well below capacity and the pre-school no longer finds it viable to open on a Friday. The pre-school organising committee assure me they will continue to operate a pre-school for as long as their finances hold out.

From within the village the History and Gardening clubs have monthly meetings and Carpet Bowls Club meet weekly and all continue solidly and are represented on the committee. Both KenYuKan and Karate clubs meet twice weekly ensuring that the hall is in use almost every day.

As with previous years, there have been many ad hoc sports hire bookings and functions held during the year.

The post office, run by Clare Butfield, no longer operates out of the hall. There have been enquiries from other post-masters about re-opening this service but to date there has been no commitment.

Health and Safety

The importance of Health and Safety (H&S) to the Committee is emphasized by its place as a standing agenda item for committee meetings. Currently regular checks are performed as part of Preschool's compliance with Ofsted regulations. In addition all regular users are asked to report any concerns, so that they can be investigated and assessed promptly. The regular fire extinguisher service was undertaken.

Committee

The Committee met four times during the calendar year and the meetings were all well attended and productive. Louise Salter has stepped down from the role of booking secretary and has been ably replaced by Georgina Magin.

Maintenance

No large maintenance work was carried out in the calendar year.

The hall remains in a state of good repair with work being performed as and when required, with sufficient funds in the bank accounts to cover foreseeable requirements.

A quote has been sought to replace the heating system on a like-for-like basis. Alternative heating solutions are also being explored that may be more environmentally friendly and have potential to reduce ongoing costs. No conclusions have been reached as to the preferred option at this stage.

Nadine Warner, our caretaker, resigned her position after many years of service. Theresa and Jimmy have taken over the roles of cleaning and maintenance with an agreed total number of hours between them.

Energy Costs

The fixed term contract for electricity supply has ended and a new contract has been put in place. Again a 3 year fixed term seemed to offer the best insulation against continually increasing energy costs. However, the price rises that have occurred across the electricity sector during the intervening time have now resulted in a huge increase in our electricity costs (approximately 40%) and therefore this will have a significant impact on the running costs of the village hall.

Finances

The hall has made a small profit this year, thanks to consistent bookings and no large maintenance work required. However, there was a decrease in takings due to the reduced number of days and reduced rate applied to pre-school bookings. On this basis the hall operates slightly above break even. With the continuing upward trend in energy prices the ability of the village hall to turn any kind of profit or even break-even is vulnerable. On this basis it is likely that booking rates will need to be raised in the immediate future although the committee has not yet agreed on the scale of any increases.

The hall does have a healthy cash balance in its bank accounts which should cover most foreseeable eventualities. The committee are considering ways to invest some of this capital in order to reduce electricity bills for the future and therefore reduce the running costs of the premises.

The committee will also consider that as the building ages, more extensive maintenance will be required and ensure sufficient reserves remain to cover ongoing repairs.

Fundraising

There have not been any significant fundraising efforts in the last year.

Miscellaneous

Di Licence has proposed that the Village Hall applies for an alcohol license so that hub nights are all legal and above board, without the need to apply for a single use license for each event. The committee continue to work with Di on the application.

Simon Keen

Chairman of the Village Hall Committee