

WESTON BY WELLAND PARISH COUNCIL



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Annual Meeting of the Parish
Wheel and Compass Pub at 7.00 pm
Wednesday 1st May 2024

Cllr Roberts (the Chair) welcomed those attending.

Chair's Report – Cllr Roberts

The council has held six meetings during the 2023-24 year. The year began with a vacancy and this vacancy was filled at the meeting in September 2023 when Councillor Mark Whitehouse was appointed. Since then, the council has been at full strength. We would like to express our appreciation to County Councillor David Howes, who frequently finds time to attend our meetings and is always helpful to us when advice and guidance is required.

During the year, the council has sadly paid tribute both to former Chair Tony Sluman and County Councillor Mike Tebbutt, a frequent and supportive presence at our meetings.

The present council was elected in May 2021 and published its aims shortly after. Last Autumn we published a review of progress and set out our goals for the remaining two years. Copies of that Council Plan were printed and distributed to residents. Looking at that Plan for 2023-25, I can report on it as follows:

- Our three WORKING GROUPS have continued to function effectively, and my colleagues will report on their work separately in a few moments. One of the aims of these groups is to involve residents in the discussions and decision-making of the council. This aim is being met, with several residents making significant contributions. However, we continue to hope for more volunteers to join these groups.

Three other aims were set out in this COUNCIL PLAN:

- Regarding the aim of replacing or refurbishing of the village sign (in the churchyard), we have made progress. On looking into the cost of replacement, we have decided against that. Members of the council have conducted a careful evaluation of the existing sign, and we believe it will be possible to refurbish it. Councillors Emery and Grandidge are taking charge of this operation, and we hope that work will be done very shortly.

- Secondly, the council has considered and developed a draft of an EMERGENCY PLAN. This is ready for consideration by residents this evening and I will say more about the rationale for this PLAN during that section of the meeting

- Finally, in our 2023-25 PLAN we set out our intention to improve and develop what has until now been referred to as the ANNUAL MEETING of the PARISH. Very few residents have attended this meeting in the recent past. It has taken place on the same evening as the ANNUAL MEETING of the PARISH COUNCIL, which has perhaps caused confusion, and there has been little incentive for residents to attend. We hope by holding this event on a separate evening, by holding it here rather than in the church, and by trying to make it an event of greater interest to residents, that it will develop into an opportunity for residents to meet in the interests of the community of which we are a part.

In my report last year, I referred to our new Communications policy. We have tried hard to communicate more effectively with residents, through the notice board, the website, the council's Facebook page, through the joint village newsletter with Sutton Bassett, and by occasional distributions of leaflets. If residents have views on the council's efforts to communicate with residents, we will welcome them.

During the term of this council, collaboration with other bodies has been something we have welcomed and often instigated. I refer mainly here to village events such as the Jubilee celebrations, and the subsequent death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and the coronation of King Charles. We are continuing these efforts with the forthcoming event for the 80th anniversary of the D DAY landings in WWII. This will be part celebration of our freedom as a country, and memorial for those who gave their lives for that freedom. We hope you will join us by bringing a picnic on that evening up to the hill between our village and Sutton.

Planning. The council considered four planning applications during the year. No objections were lodged to any. However, with two of the applications, the council did submit comments for consideration

Finally, I would like to thank members of the parish council, who have all made substantial contributions to the council's work in the last twelve months.

Accounting Statement 2023-24

The Chair read the Accounting Statement for the last financial year, noting an opening balance of £6,081.33 listing various income and expenditure items and a closing balance of £6,909.26. The full accounts can be found on the parish council's website.

Reports from

a) Parochial Church Council (PCC) – Margaret White

In May, together with the Parish Council, the village celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III. We used the Church as the weather was inclement, food, drink, and decoration, kindly donated by villagers, made a happy celebration. David Warden presented a history of Weston, photographic exhibition.

Thanks to a very generous donation, work was completed inside the Church to repair a cracked Arch. In the last two years, under the umbrella of the PCC, St. Mary's Restoration Team have raised a magnificent £10000 towards the work which has started recently on areas of the roof. The team have worked incredibly hard, had good fun along the way and importantly brought villagers together, to enjoy the varied events. We have the plant sale on the 10th of May with all profit for the Restoration. We have been promised Grants totalling £15750 towards this work, repairs will

cost in the region of £30000 but as in old buildings, further problems are uncovered as the work progresses.

We are lucky to have Rev. Amanda Oliver as our Rector. Amanda looks after seven churches within the Benefice, from Sutton Bassett to Cottingham. One new idea starts on the Sunday 5th May with Wild Weston. An outside Adventure for families meeting at 4pm in the Churchyard.

We have the joint Fete on 18th May hosted by Jane & Robert Skelton in Sutton Bassett. Robert is Church Warden in Sutton and has recently taken the role on for Weston as well.

Thank you everyone for the support you give to the PCC, and The Fundraisers events, all we do is on a voluntary basis, for the benefit of our Village.

b) Tree Warden – Graham Garratt

I have planted/replanted 10-15 oak trees on Sutton Hill, replacing dead trees, fitting new and larger guards and marking with barrier tape to reduce the risk from hedge trimming - trees and materials from GVG. I have c.30 small oak trees from the acorns the children collected in winter 22/23. These have been looked after and recently potted on. They will be ready for planting out winter 24/25. I have potted c.40 seedling oak from Mr Hart's farmyard, for planting out in the next two years if they survive the late potting. I am happy to give these to villagers when ready if they have a long-term suitable location for planting. With the Env. Group I would like to find a location in the parish for tree planting in winter 24/25, this could be a community activity or just the tree warden. I am happy to supply additional trees and materials if not already someone's obligation, e.g. Under a planning permission or grant payment

c) Litter Picking Group, Weston Wombles – Ali Carver

My role as co-ordinator of Weston Wombles must be one of the easiest roles in the village thanks to a great team of self-motivated pickers. Whilst littering remains an ongoing problem in the approaches to the village, the amount of litter on our verges and in the drainage ditches is kept low, thanks to the efforts of these dedicated residents. The difference both the "official" and unofficial wombles make is not to be underestimated. I know from experience that it is not uncommon to collect almost a black bag full of litter just between Weston and Ashley turn, so it's clear to see just how unsightly the approaches to our village would be without these lovely individuals being so generous with their time and effort. So, on behalf of the residents of Weston by Welland, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our litter pickers, whether a frequent or occasional collector of rubbish. You are looking after wildlife, helping to prevent flooding and keeping the countryside beautiful. Well done and thank you.

d) Recreation Area Working Group – Cllr Grandidge

The last 12 months have seen a few milestones achieved. Exactly 12 months ago, the 30-year Lease was agreed and signed by Chris Parker and the Parish Council. We would like to thank Chris for his patience and the opportunity to develop a piece of his land for use by the wider community. With the Planning Permission already in place this took us into a new and exciting phase of the project, raising the funds to make it happen.

As many of you are aware, the Working Group consists of David Warden, Nic Hanlon, Bob Roberts and me. I would like to offer my thanks to all of them for their continued hard work and

determination in helping get the project to this stage. Not only that, but without spending a single penny of taxpayer's money.

To deliver everything we have Planning Permission for would cost over £100,000 so the Working Group agreed that to maximise the use of the Recreation area, we would split the development into 3 areas. The first would be to install the footpath and pedestrian access to the site, along with the perimeter fencing and grassing of the relevant areas. We believe that this can be achieved with c the first £20,000 raised and will allow everyone to enjoy the site. The next £10,000 to £20,000 raised would be spent on creating the Children's play area with the final part of the project, being the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) which will be far and away the biggest expenditure.

So, to the Fundraising. As with all projects, it was important that as new challenges arise, we adapt and bring new skills to the team. With that in mind, in September of last year we created a Recreation Area Fundraising Working Group consisting of Anna Cowling, Daniel Duncan, Katherine Cox, Mark Whitehouse, David Warden, Nic Hanlon and myself.

We have met several times and agreed roles and responsibilities as to the best way to raise the funds we need. In December, Anna was instrumental in organising our very first event, the Village Christmas Party. This was a huge success and raised our first £1,000. I'd like to thank Anna and Katherine for their hard work in making this happen and to Charlotte and Natalie for hosting such a great event.

The Fundraising Working Group agreed that it would be a good idea to create a Charity. One of the main benefits of creating a Charity is that when we raise money, we can ask donors if they would like to Gift Aid which allows the Charity to reclaim 25p for every £1 donated. The main challenge with setting up a Charity is the time that it can take, which is typically over 12 months as the Charity Commission has a large backlog of Applications.

It then came to light that there is a dormant Charity in the village that was set up, as 'Uncle Albert' would say, 'During the War'. Anna is in the process of liaising with the existing Trustees with the aim that we can use it for the Recreation Area.

10 months ago, we applied for a grant through North Northants Council for £20,000 that was part of the Governments levelling up program. Unfortunately, we weren't successful. More recently we have applied for a £10,000 grant from the Rural Community Needs Fund. As with all these applications we needed to supply lots of detail and for this application we needed to supply quotations for various pieces of building work as well as an independent view of the project. I'd like to thank Nic Hanlon and Ryan Cowling for their help with this. We will find out in early June if we have been successful.

A couple of months ago we applied for Round 2 of the Levelling Up Grant, and I'm absolutely delighted to share with you that last Friday we found out that we have been awarded a grant of £20,000. This really is fantastic news as it will allow us to crack on with Stage 1 of the project so I'm hoping that by this time next year we will have a safe, level and grassed area for the village to use. Part of this will involve things like fencing, levelling topsoil and sowing grass seed, so we will be looking for volunteers in the village to help with this work so we can keep the cost down. There will be lots more fundraising events to come, and the team are keen for as many people as possible to get involved.

e) Environment Working Group – NOT YET PROVIDED

f) Highways Working Group

The Highways working group has discussed and tackled a number of issues in the village including traffic speed, parking on pavements, mowing, the state of pavements and roads and dog mess. Councillor Score & Councillor Emery have recently attended two meetings with North Northamptonshire Council and Kier Highways to raise some of these issues. We have also been offered a village walk around with representatives to discuss some of these issues further.

Vehicle Speed Sign (VAS).

The promised funding for a new pole on Ashley Road eventually materialised and the new post was installed in early March. This position will enable monitoring of traffic speed entering the village from the direction of Ashley. Following an agreement with Natalie and Charlotte at the W&C we have use of the Pub sign for monitoring traffic entering from the direction of Welham. The PC is currently applying for permission to use the new lamppost on Valley Road. Limited data from the speed sign is published in the village magazine and posted on the PC Web site. Full data is available if required.

Road Marking / Speed Signs / Village Gateway.

The issue of additional speed signs, road marking has been discussed with NCC / Kier during in-village meetings and more recently at formal meetings at Corby. Unfortunately, grants for such works are very unlikely in the present climate. Works such as Village Gateways or Dragon Teeth Road marks would need to be funded by the Village. The cost of any of these items could not be funded from the PC budget. Temporary 30mph speed signs were provided by NNC. These were attached to the Weston by Welland signs. A 'No parking on the pavement' sign was attached to the W&C post.

Potholes / Fix My Street/Gritting Routes

During recent meetings with NNC / Kier, we have expressed our concern about the response to reports on the 'Fix my Street' website. They have admitted there were issues during the changeover from Kettering to NCC, however, they assured us the site is now working correctly. Reports are categorised and investigated, and time frames are given for repair or rectification. The PC advise anyone entering a report, ideally with photographs, that they monitor the site for response times and if they don't believe there is a satisfactory outcome then report the fault again. Persistent issues in the same location will be flagged up on the system. The PC will be applying to have the road between WbW and Welham included in the local gritting route. No decision will be made until September.

Open Forum

Requests were made for a repeat of the defibrillator training and for another Tree Walk around the village. A suggestion was made that the Parish Meeting record book (1894-1973) be scanned and made available as part of the history of the village on our website. The draft Emergency Plan was distributed, and feedback requested before 18th May.