



Westhoughton Community Network

Meeting: Wednesday, 19th October 2022 (7:00pm)

at Winifred Kettle Day Centre

Minutes

1. Present

Groups represented (13)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Bethel Crowd (BCD) | 9. J.E.T. (JET) |
| 2. Cornerstone ADS (CADS) | 10. Westhoughton Art Group (WAG) |
| 3. Daisy Hill in Bloom (DHiB) | 11. Westhoughton Local History Group (WLHG) |
| 4. Friends of Daisy Hill Station (FDHS) | 12. Westhoughton Garden and Allotments Society (WGAS) |
| 5. Friends of Eatock Lodge (FoEL) | 13. Westhoughton Golf Club (WGC) |
| 6. Friends of Westhoughton Station (FWS) | ~ Bolton Council (Growth & Regeneration) |
| 7. Howfen Radio (HR) | ~ Co-op in the Community |
| 8. Senior Solutions (SNS) | |

Individuals in attendance (16)

Trevor Benn (FoEL)	Colin Gradwell (CASD)	Jack Speight (FoDHS/WGAS)
Denise Bentley	Phil Lamb (BCMBC)	Gill Williams (DHiB)
David Chadwick (HEART)	Brian Leyden (FoWS)	Ann Benn (FoEL) SEC
Val Chadwick (WLHG)	Elsa Parker (COOP)	Chris Buckley (WCN) CHAIR
John Dale	Peter Schofield (BCD)	
Tim Eden (JET/WGC/HR)	Frances Settle (SNS)	

Apologies (9)

Janice Bayliss (Women of Westhoughton); Stephen Freeborn (Friends of Westhoughton Station); Steve Harrington (Rotary Club of Westhoughton); David Kaye (Westhoughton Local History Group/Lostock Cricket Club); Joy Mooney (Wingates Band); Susan Missin (Harold Daniels Legacy Fund); Mark Taylor (HOPE); Jason Taylor (Bethel Crowd); Michelle Todd (Senior Solutions).



2. Welcome/Apologies

Chairing the meeting, once again at the former day-room at the Winifred Kettle, a substitute for the Library unavailable due to a lack of heating, Chris Buckley welcomed our special guest Phil Lamb from Bolton Council (Regeneration) and those able to make this evening's meeting. There were a few apologies. We quickly went around the room with introductions from groups represented.

3. Town Centre Regeneration Project

The main item of this meeting was to get an update and further information on progress with the £7m Bolton Council-led Westhoughton Town Centre Regeneration Project from Phil Lamb, Principal Project Officer, Growth and Regeneration (Bolton Council).

Phil introduced himself and gave an overview of the process which began in 2019 (he gave a presentation to WCN on the *Draft Westhoughton Masterplan* at [M34](#) 10/9/19). Detailing the formal consultation process involving councillors, local businesses and public, the formation of a Steering Group... the feedback and consultation helping to shape how the *Capital Investment* funds would be spent. The Regeneration Team reporting to Executive Member for Regeneration Cllr. Cox and later Cllr. Warren. The consultation reports, strategy and Masterplan can be seen at [Invest in Bolton](#). Similar exercises were done with Horwich and Little Lever which were to share in the regeneration funding pot; regeneration of Farnworth was more advanced, it having access to the larger *Future High Street Fund*.

There were six KDPs (Key Development Priorities) for Westhoughton:

- **Improvements to Pedestrian Links to Town Centre** (new paving Library St., Marsden Street). The passageway link to the Ditchfield Carpark shelved for time being due to issues with waste containers from Market Street businesses located there.
- **Central Park** was added at Steering Group's request once Gaiety site removed, as it was seen as bordering on the town centre. Some environmental improvements there so far...
- **Car Parking Strategy** – this came before the Steering Group in March 2022. Its proposals on hold given it was deemed parking spaces (Ditchfield and Library Street) acceptable for a town this size; possibility that latter will become short-stay (3 hours max), former remaining long-stay. Should development dictate greater need they would look at acquiring the Mill Street site. Regarding the Gaiety site, which had been considered for residential then a public space/car park, an application came forward for a 'care unit', which was revised to make it less intrusive and subsequently approved.
- **Market Street** – a *Streets-for-All* concept. Currently out to tender for approval (December) and works to start by January 2023 (completion October). New paving along its length (mix of natural stone and hard-wearing concrete), wider pavements in some places, new black top road surface (Council) and



Westhoughton Community Network

longer term Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) funded cyclops junctions at either end – these are crossings that stop all traffic from any direction for pedestrians/cyclists to cross a (box) junction.

Works will aim to minimise disruption for businesses. New trees, some bollards. Parking bays to be retained but some may be moved to aid traffic flow.

- **Town Hall & Library Building** – Masterplan had two key development priorities: to repurpose and repopulate unused Town Hall building and to look at access arrangements for the Library and Carnegie building to allow greater usage. Seen holistically, there will be a 2-phase approach with the priority given to bringing the Town Hall back into use before looking at the library building. Town Hall budget of £2.8m (current draft proposals include 2 restaurants, coffee shop, offices on 1st and 2nd floor and reinstatement of Town Council Chamber). Of initial £2.6m ring-fenced budget £800k has been used on roof. A further £1m is sought from Executive Cabinet to implement plans. Nothing has been formally approved yet. Any commercial rental opportunities will be marketed locally first, then regionally and then nationally. Its use must be commercially viable to maintain and sustain the building into the future. Timetable to look at appointing a main contractor by end of year, with intrusive structural surveys between November and February. Phase 1 works (the strip-out) between February and June. Main works to run between July 2023 and June 2024. Internal works will not need an accompanying planning application/consent. There will be prior works to install a separate boiler for the new library heating system (currently run off Town Hall and no longer adequate).

The Regeneration Team have produced and updated a [FAQ](#) on the project and processes in response to the protest/campaign group that emerged in 2022. Phil stated that criticisms of the process were unfounded; everything has been above board and followed protocol.

Any questions/queries to: westhoughtontowncentrefunding@bolton.gov.uk.

Phil Lamb then took questions. Car parking: currently no changes to length of stay and free parking to remain (policy for Bolton borough outlying town centres). Community Space: to remain on upper floors of library; it may be reconfigured to make even more space (removal of some pillars may be a constraining factor). Project committed to providing community space (Westhoughton Local History Group as largest group consulted directly). Peter Schofield raised a question about cost of hire and frustration and difficulty in hiring council venues (e.g., the waste of the Daisy Hill Community Centre, not used because of this and it then becoming part of St. James CP School). Frances Settle questioned the astronomical cost of needing Bolton Council access and security personnel for venue hire. Phil to take back concerns and made assurances that cost and management is being looked at saying that it was inappropriate to change same rates as Albert Halls and that local management (Library) would be the best way forward, though this would need to be agreed and signed off by leaders. Phil confirmed that the timescale for any



Westhoughton Community Network

improvement in community space unlikely to happen until after Town Hall work complete (late 2024). Phase 2 (Community space) will be dependent upon additional funding and in the meantime it will be maintained/repared and used as is. History Group (Val Chadwick) had been using the Carnegie Hall for daytime meetings with permission of library – this deemed acceptable and with a little bit of remedial work including a screen/audio provision could be a short-term solution for daytime meetings. David Chadwick raised questions about the delayed provision of 2 electric charging points in the Library Street carpark (responsibility being ducked Aldi/Council), improvements to the Market Street road surface to cope with heavy buses and the need to improve the toilet facilities including disabled in the library building which are currently less than satisfactory for a public building (Phil to look into Backlog Maintenance Budget).

Continuing the discussion the Chair expressed some frustration given there was a real need for more community space and in particular a larger room/venue for bigger events, functions and even performance (50-year old drama group The Bethel Crowd homeless) that the 'community' bit of the regeneration project is some way off being addressed. The *Future Use of Civic Buildings* proposals for the library building were referenced, and whilst an existing building compromise looked promising ([project overview](#)) yet seem some way off happening – if at all (funding?). There had been a newspaper article about a £40m Bury Council regeneration initiative in Radcliffe (similar sized satellite town) with a bespoke [multi-purpose Civic HUB](#) at its heart – awarded £20m from Govt. 'Levelling Up' funding; it seems a shame that the vision for Westhoughton is not at that level and space for such a new-build project so easily let go (i.e., the Gaiety site). We were reminded of all of the housing developments going on in Westhoughton without any significant investment in facilities and services.

It was felt that in the short-term the large room of the Carnegie will need to be made available for community use but will need some 'tarting up' and modest investment in its facilities (audio/visual). There were comments raised about needing to ensure access and egress were satisfactory for older and disabled users (there is a small lift); though H&S regulation would ensure this was looked at as part of any plans.

As the wide-ranging discussion continued it covered services currently offered in existing community centres (computer training, Police drop-ins...) and desired services (local Citizens Advice drop-ins), it was suggested that awareness could be improved as many are unaware of what is actually available.

The Masterplan was signed-off (March 2021) and plans and proposals will follow what has been agreed - Town Hall (mixed use commercial/office/civic) and Library (community), the detail to be finalised. Notwithstanding the direct input from WCN, it was suggested by Phil Lamb that community groups lobbied Councillors Cox and Warren to try to ensure their needs are met, but with an awareness of what is feasible and the limited budget.

The Chair thanked Phil Lamb for his attendance and candour, and Phil thanked everyone for their input, questions and feedback and the spirit in which it was presented; he would be happy to return to WCN at a future date. He reminded us of



Westhoughton Community Network

a [Council Survey](#) to gauge need for community space which will help with further planning and space allocation (by end November).

There was a short break for refreshments.

There was a brief discussion of the previous hour's content and actions WCN and individual groups could take to ensure we are heard and understood by Councillors overseeing the regeneration project.

4. Information Share

Given the very recent meeting, a shorter Information Share this time.

Cornerstone ADS – Colin Gradwell. The drama group has a Murder Mystery (Who Killed the Pop Star?) at the weekend (21 & 22/10 – 7:30pm), tickets £5 including light refreshments. The February Panto will be Hansel and Gretel.

Bethel Crowd has a Nativity/Carols evening (2 & 3/12) at The HUB – tickets via [Ticket Source](#).

Friends of Westhoughton Station – Brian Leyden gave an update on electrification work though the station to begin in the early new year - raising bridges and lowering line levels where necessary. Station area seems to be attracting youths hanging out – lots of litter, bottles... A grant received from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) used to buy and soon install an old-fashioned Westhoughton Station sign.

Friends of Eatock Lodge – further wildlife drama at the Local Nature Reserve with the adult swans unexpectedly flying off and abandoning their five cygnets, one of which had found its way to a Gibfield lake joining its 2021 sibling. The cygnets doing fine; the adults briefly seen at Clayhole, Hindley Green (where they met!). An isolated ASB incident reported. Volunteers doing some tidying up clearing excess growth from the hill.

Daisy Hill in Bloom (Gill Williams). Some late blooming geraniums to be left in their planters until removed and replanted in the spring. The group is struggling with both fewer volunteers and post-Lockdown momentum and the loss of the Town Clerk... Christine Morris was always very helpful with group business and prompt with any payments needing reimbursed. Gill hopes things will settle and new people will get involved.

Westhoughton Local History Group – Val Chadwick spoke of the upcoming meeting at the library 20/10 and speaker 'Life in the 1960s'. The subsequent meeting is on 17/11 (10:30pm) with Bill Usher, Westhoughton-based artist talking about his art and booklets. Christmas cards are available.

Although no longer employed by the Co-op Elsa Parker did a brief update on her role on the **Co-op Members Council** supporting Local Causes with the news that HUB-based Westhoughton Community Assist Service (Food Pantry and support for needy) and the Tuesday Club (OAP Social Group) have been successful and will receive Co-op Member's donations for the next 12-months. The third supported



Westhoughton Community Network

Local Cause is Bolton Middlebrook Leisure Trust (Sports programmes for young people).

Friends of Daisy Hill Station (Jack Speight). Some vandalism with a bench broken, smashed shelter glass, plants pulled out. Network Rail started some station painting but it has not been finished due to rotting wood – question as to why the wood has not been replaced when other work done. Hard to get answers or action on ASB.

Westhoughton Garden and Allotment Society has meetings at the John Holt Centre 20/10 and 17/11 but Jack is finding it hard to get and afford ‘expert’ speakers; he hopes with the support of the local groups circuit to find alternative speakers for the new group as it develops.

Chris Buckley mentioned being in touch with Dave Hendry of **Westhoughton Art Group**; he having moved away to Cumbria still comes down to the John Holt Centre for some of the Monday morning art sessions. He says when they have guest tutors now they are able to use cameras to film up close and put on a screen for learners to view. Dave follows WCN and local groups and sends his best wishes.

Senior Solutions were mentioned with some special events coming up: a Halloween Party (31/10) and plans for a Christmas Fair (3/12) at the Winifred Kettle Centre.

HEART – David Chadwick gave a brief update on the Hulton Park situation. The Public Enquiry with the Planning Inspector took place (6 & 7/10), David feeling that whilst their case was put forward as well as they could in the time allowed, given what is on offer in the second application is better than the first and Peel’s intent and marketing muscle, it is likely to get approved again [confirmed 25/10]. The condition for any building being allowed then depending on whether a Ryder Cup tournament is awarded (no decision yet on 2031 or 2035) – Spain (Catalunya) is favoured for 2031; in the running for the UK the London Golf Club and the unbuilt, untried and untested Bolton Hulton Park. Should Hulton Park be chosen this will mean over 1,000 houses being built with the loss of ancient land and natural habitats – this in addition to all the other development we have been seeing.

In bringing the meeting to a close the Chair stated that the normal schedule would mean a February meeting, though if anything develops we may add a meeting before the end of the year. A desire was also expressed to get back to having a rotating Chair format like before the Lockdown interruptions for future meetings.

Chris Buckley thanked everyone for coming and participating in an interesting and informative meeting. A special thanks to John, Denise and Elsa for helping with the doors and refreshments.

Meeting finished at 9:00pm.

WesthoughtonCommunityNetwork.co.uk
facebook.com/westhoughton.net