# Village AGM 2024– Report from Westoning Lower School

Over the last year the school has put effort into supporting mental wellbeing of pupils, staff and to an extent parents. Generally, pupils have shown remarkable resilience and now have returned to near pre-covid life-skill levels.

The school leans increasingly on our academy -the Pyramid Schools Trust. The Trust has gained two new lower schools this year (Harlington Lower and Sundon Lower). The addition of further lower schools aids us in the cross fertilisation of teaching ideas and techniques.

It looks as though there will be an uptick in pupil numbers next year. With this being alongside roofs appearing on the new housing estate, suggests that any worries about the financial sustainability of the school significantly diminish. The increase in cash these numbers unlock will benefit children of the village.

The school is grateful for the vouchers made available by the Parish Council for needful families. We have also accepted a planter from the Parish Council. Pupils have already written to people for plant donations and are keen to make something of which to be proud. One downside of the flagstaff positioning is that too many people think this is something to do with the school, maybe this is something we can work on to communicate better.

Whenever I visit the school, I see keen and well behaved kids. They are a credit to the village and reflect well on the skills of the school staff.

Brian Valentine

Chair, Westoning Lower School Local Governing Board

Westoning PC Annual Report CBC May 2024 – J Jamieson

Continue to be involved in day to day issues such as potholes, planning applications and hedge/grass cutting, ASB/Noise, car parking, fly tipping, housing where a number of issues have arisen over the year

Flooding

Flooding continues to be a major issue, Holme Farm Way is not resolved, while some work has been done, we need to await drier ground before the landowners are able to  get the equipment to clear out the various ditches. Further to this Highways have committed to a full investigation of the pipe. Gullies have been cleared in the village and this has helped issues around Tyburn Lane and also greenfield road under the railway bridge.  Ditches around the turning to Tingrith have yet to be cleared and still reports of flooding to some gardens in that area. Highways were due to follow up flooding off field by Sampshill Rd railway bridge, have not checked this recently.

Development to South of village – this is still awaiting a decision from CBC, which should be immanent as understand developer has provided the necessary detail. Understand that the various 106 monies previously discussed are due.

Councillor Grant – used to support Share – Library of things and Flitabus

Highways

Highways continue to deteriorate, not helped by Independents implementing a near 50% cut to highways maintenance capital. Greenfield Rd is due to have major patching this year.  I continue to chase a number of outstanding issues, which were discussed with Officers on the village walkabout in February.

* Pelican Crossing – continue to chase, this should have been replaced already

Cycle/Foot Path

Continue to work on the cycle/footpath to Flitwick and Harlington. Money has been secured from both developments and put a proposal forward to council that was self funding but was rejected by the Independents with Labour and Liberals sitting on their hands.

Central Bedfordshire Financial Position

CBC likely to have a gross deficit in 2024/5 before adjustments of around £20m, this is likely to reduce to £10m deficit after use of contingency and additional government grants. The deficit will need to be made up from reserves.

This years budget sees a 5% council tax increase, a £55 bin tax, cuts to various services including Highways, Libraries, Business Investment, and higher charges for parking amongst others. Fortunately we were able to oblige a U turn on removal of bus subsidies which are much needed to support rural bus services, however these services are still under pressure from higher costs and removal of pre-covid fare support by the council.

School Buses

Proposals to change school bus transport to nearest school will be coming to OSC in June and Exec in August. This would be very detrimental for Westoning children and should only be done in conjunction with a review of catchment to avoid confusion and splitting up class groups as they transition.

**Westoning recreation club 2023/24 summary report**

The club continues to function despite increasing pressure of costs and the reduced footfall of people venturing out, which has affected all pubs / clubs throughout. Whilst at present we do not offer food this is something that has been suggested by members and one we are considering with a variety of options currently being looked at which will increase much needed funds for the club. We have tried to encourage some away supporters on their way to LTFC to visit the club (via organised clubs only). This has been successful on several occasions and something we will continue to look into to maintain the longevity of the club.

We currently have 3 adult football teams playing Saturday’s and Sundays albeit with the excessive cutting of the grass pitches almost weekly no football was played at the rec since December 2023 through to March which has severely affected the clubs finances due to non-pitch fees being paid and no sales after the games. The club arranged a meeting with all football teams and the PC and this has hopefully been resolved with a new grass contractor now in place.

In addition to the adult teams, we have the Westoning youth teams playing at the rec on Saturday’s, and training taking place during the week.

We also managed to successfully engage with a goalkeeping club throughout the summer who used the grounds once a week for practice. Fitness club has approached us again to use the clubs facilities during this summer months.

The club is proud to have one pool team made up of local people (although this may increase to two next season) who play in the Bedfordshire pool league every Tuesday. The team won their division last year and were promoted to Division one where they currently sit third.

Monday and Friday night Darts is extremely popular and those that play are looking to join a local league to participate in.

The Function room is now available to hire as new doors have been fitted, meaning this is no longer a danger to anyone using the facilities. Club decking needs repair which will be the focus in the coming months.

Fire certificate passed / Local licensing officer visited, and processes have been put into place

Yearly race day very popular. We managed to successfully do two trips last time July/Sept.

Report on the Parish Church to the Parish Council

The year from 8th May 23 to 9th May 24

**Overview**

Nigel Washington retired on 30th September 22, his last service in Westoning being on 4th September 22.

After that Westoning Church, together with the other two churches in the Benefice (Tingrth and Harlington ), was engaged with St. Albans Diocese (principally the Bishop of Bedford and Archdeacon of Bedford) in finding a new priest. After many rounds of advertising and several interviews of unsuccessful candidates, we are delighted that, following interviews during a visit to the Benefice on 21st February, Revd Mark Edwards will be joining us. Mark will be licensed as Priest in Charge of the Benefice by the Bishop of St. Albans at Harlington Church on 5th June. Mark and his wife Natalie are greatly looking forward to their new ministry and to making the vicarage in Church Road Westoning their new home.

**Services**

Attendance at services has not noticeably dropped over the year despite the continuing vacancy. Services have been maintained each Sunday with the help of visiting priests (including Revd Roger Wood and Revd Jane Fox in particular), by the two Readers (Lay Ministers) – Jon Denman and Steve Farmer - and the Families and Outreach Consultant, Rebecca Caird. Special services held at Harvest, Christmas and during Easter week were particularly popular and well received.

Funerals have been undertaken by Jon Denman with Nigel Washington returning to take a few.

**Church Activities over the last year in addition to services**

1. **Focusing on outreach –** for families, children and young people we run **TWiG** (Tea with God) a 0-9 year old club (our version of Messy Church) which meets monthly in the Village Hall. It mainly meets after school but in school holidays it also runs as a breakfast club.
2. **Youth Group** . It is now known as Lighthouse and has been very successful, meeting twice a month in the Village Hall.
3. **Little Stars –** toddler group meets once a week in term time in the village school.
4. **School** – assemblies are taken once a week by Rebecca Caird.
5. **Westcaf, Sewing Bee, Friday Fellowship and Men’s Breakfast** allcontinue to flourish**.** These groups provide a great link into the community.
6. **Healing Rooms –** this meets once a week at the Flitwick Village Hall Indoor Friday Market and provides an opportunity to meet people where they are and offer them prayer. In addition, prayer via zoom is offered once a week on a Wednesday afternoon.
7. **Re-Ordering of the Church –** progress has been somewhat delayed by the need to find the best new heating system for the church. A meeting with representatives from the Diocese, the church architect, and others to take the project forward will take place on 16th May. It is hopped to start work in April of next year.

8th May 2024 - Jon Denman (Reader)

**Village Hall (Spensley Trust) Report to Parish Annual Meeting 2024 – 8th May**

We are very lucky that our village hall is well used and thus financially viable, other community buildings are not so lucky.

The regular activities on offer include:

Carpet bowls, Westcaf coffee morning, Sewing group, 3 Yoga classes, Dance for under 5’s, Movement to Music for over 60’s, Soft play and Socatots for toddlers, Westoning Players, Youth Group, Friday Fellowship and Twig family events. We also now offer a pilates class for people with spinal problems on Friday mornings. The hall also hosts WI and Parish Council meetings and Big Screen film nights. There have been fundraising events such as the Macmillan Coffee Morning and the hall served as refreshment stop on a long distance walk in November. The hall is also regularly booked for family and children’s parties and for various meetings.

Looking to the future, our long term plan to keep improving the hall has been boosted by receipt of a £19,000 Lottery Grant which will go towards re-roofing and insulating the store rooms. Once that’s done we plan to invest in new chairs.

Westoning tennis club Report 5th May 2024

Westoning Tennis Club is still going, although not as flourishing as it once was.

Not sure how many active members we have now as our technical membership secretary moved away and our new one hasn’t yet quite caught up with passwords etc to get into the system, hopefully this will happen soon.

We are only entering 1 team in the South Beds Tennis League our Mens ‘A’.

We are still affiliated with the Lawn Tennis Association, and have Safeguarding Officer, which ensures our insurance and standards of practice are adhered to.

We have 1 club night on Tuesday evening, not particularly well attended, some new enthusiastic young blood is sorely needed.

We are having an Open Day and BBQ on the 2nd June, this may encourage some interest.

The courts are in reasonable condition and dare I say it there is hardly any vandalism.

All in all we jog along but it would be good to have some younger enthusiastic members with a little time and effort who would like to help the club.