**2018-2019 Reports from Clubs & Activities for Parish Meeting**

**West Wratting Parish Council Chairman's report 13th May 2019**

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to welcome you all to the 2019 West Wratting Annual Parish Meeting.

Since the last meeting there have been a couple of changes in the membership of the Parish Council. Campbell Ross-Bain has stepped down from the Chair with me as his replacement, and has resigned from the Parish Council, so we are pleased to welcome Barry Glennon-Lynch as our new Parish Councillor.

The Parish Council owns and is responsible for a number of properties in West Wratting, principally the Village Hall, the Sports Pavilion, the Recreation Ground and childrens' playground with associated equipment, the Water Pump and Shelter, the Pocket Park and Village Pound. Smaller assets are 2 notice boards, 2 bus shelters, the village sign, phone box and bench, as well as (with special thanks to Councillor Chandler) several litter bins. All of these assets are in a reasonable state of repair although there is a need to improve the equipment in the childrens' playground, but more of that later.

I would like to thank the parish grass cutter, Mark Grimwood, for keeping our verges and Pocket Park tidy during the growing season.

This year the parish council has once again increased the precept by the cost of inflation. It is important to note that Parish Councils are recommended to hold at least a year to a year and a half of their precept in reserve and our accounts show that we are close to the higher reserve figure. However, we have planned and probable expenditure over the next year that will reduce our financial reserves quite considerably, as well as having a continued backstop responsibility for the Village Hall and Sports Pavilion.

In addition to maintaining and where possible improving village assets, the Parish Council has the task of commenting on planning applications. The Parish Council has a policy of using direct mail deliveries to ensure that the parishioners most likely to be affected by a planning application are aware of it and know the required timescale for comment to SCDC, the planning authority

Although the Parish Council is unable to have a direct effect on traffic volumes and traffic speeds through the village, it continues to work on mitigating both. Last year Councillors Ross-Bain and Nichols were instrumental in obtaining 40 mph 'buffer zones' in the village and the parishioners living in these new zones have since commented favourably about their effect on vehicle speeds. The Parish Council has not yet been billed by Cambridge County Council for the 40 mph limits and these are likely to cost in excess of £ 3,000. The Parish Council continues to work with the other Balsham Ward parishes by sharing 2 Speed Indicator Devices or SID's. Once again, parishioners have commented positively on the reduction of vehicle speeds entering the village when the SID's are in place and I must thank Councillor Bonfield for his tireless work collecting, erecting and taking down the equipment. Due to the SID's success, the Parish Council will now be investigating the purchase of one for the exclusive use of West Wratting. The village Speedwatch team continues to run several sessions a month around the village and I must also thank Martin Davey for his work as the Speedwatch Co-Ordinator, as well as the volunteers from the village who help make up his teams.

The Parish Council has set up a 'Playground Group' consisting of two Councillors and 2 Parishioners to work out how the childrens' playground equipment can be improved. The recent ROSPA report on the current equipment has identified that it is in need of refurbishment in the near future, if it is to remain safe and in any case, the current equipment really only appeals to children up to the age of 9 or 10. The 'Playground Group' has a wide ranging brief to look at the playground, including removing everything and starting again, or refurbishing the current equipment and then adding to it. Whatever is decided, undoubtedly the Parish Council will need to apply for grant money to pay for what needs to be done, but the PC will certainly have to make a contribution towards it.

The Parish Council is also working with our District Councillor Geoff Harvey and South Cambs District Council to have a public consultation on a Gating Order for the Byway that crosses Six Mile Bottom Road at Green End Cottages. If granted, a Gating Order would reduce the level of antisocial behaviour that affects our parishioners who live beside the Byway.

In order to help support and protect our more vulnerable parishioners, the Parish Council is pleased to give financial support to the Village Warden and Parish Nurse Plus schemes and thanks Sisse McCall and Suan Rowland for liaising with these organisations on behalf of the village.

There are also many parishioners working hard to make West Wratting parish such a happy and vibrant place to live in and, at the risk of offending the people that I've left out, I must thank Simon Anderson, Simon Chandler and Ben Willcocks for their grass cutting efforts, Mike Rowland for the village website and with his team for looking after the Village Hall, Linda Gorman and team for ensuring that St Andrews Church is cleaned and adorned with flowers, and Sherry O'Donovan and Catherine Willcocks plus their helpers for the monthly Saturday Café. There are many activities that take place in the village including the d'Abo Tennis Club, West Wratting Football Club, Keep Fit, Tai Chi, FitSteps, Monthly Lunch Club, Over 60s, 2 Book Clubs, the Bridge Club and the Church Bellringers at St Andrews.

Leaving the best till last, but definitely not the least, I must thank the inimitable Colin 'Cobby' McCall and all of his team of village litter pickers for keeping our roads, paths and verges looking so pristine, as well as Rachel and Peter Causton, our welcoming hosts at the CAMRA award winning West Wratting Chestnut Tree pub for keeping our spirits high throughout the year.

Personally, as well as on behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to thank Jenny Richards our Parish clerk for her valiant work over the last year and, in particular, for keeping me on the straight and narrow. Jenny, please accept a small token of my and our appreciation.

**Village Hall Report to the West Wratting Annual Parish Meeting - May 2019**

This has been a year of consolidation. Our regular activities, Keep Fit, T’ai Chi, and FitSteps have continued, typically with increasing numbers, wider catchment areas and improving skill levels. Regarding specific functions we have seen a pleasing diversity of activities and ages including Bingo and quiz fund-raisers for young-at-heart adults, Little Movers dance mornings and a film show at a children’s party. Importantly, we continue to be a popular stopping point for Cycle Club events. The monthly Saturday Café continues to be a great attraction. I thank Sherry O’Donovan and Catherine Willcocks for directing some of the donations to help meet costs of running the hall, and we are grateful too for a boost from the proceeds of the Progressive Supper. Our finances are again in a steady state.

We are continuing to explore the best way forward for fitting double-glazed replacement windows to the rear of the building and an upgrade to the doors separating the committee room from the main hall. Both projects will require grants. I have confirmed that the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation and in particular the Wadlow Wind Farm Community Fund will accept applications from West Wratting Parish Council, making us eligible to reclaim the VAT incurred.

Diana Edwards has continued to arrange much of the routine maintenance and inspections, advised when needed by Nigel Heath. Jenny Knowelden continues to keep the premises clean and tidy, and has treated the floor of the main hall. We are grateful for the voluntary efforts of those village residents who have helped maintain the grounds by gritting the steps and ramp in winter, and hedge and grass cutting through the year.

Tim Bonfield has replaced Campbell Ross-Bain as a nominated Parish Council representative and has already made a helpful contribution. My thanks go as always to all members of our village hall management committee for their active support.

Mike Rowland, Chairman, West Wratting Village Hall Management Committee

**West Wratting Lunch Club** 2018 – 2019

Pete and Rachel continue to provide us with scrumptious lunches at The Chestnuts every third Thursday of the month. We meet for 12.30 and finish lunch usually around 2pm. It is consistently well attended with a core of West Wratting attendees but also from other villages. As numbers have increased in recent months, the pub has agreed to extend the numbers it caters for from 26 to 31. We are grateful for all that the Pub does to accommodate us and make this such an enjoyable social outing for so many people.

Suan Rowland

**West Wratting Café**

This is held on the first Saturday of every month between 10.30 and 12 in the village hall. Volunteers provide help in setting up, serving and baking cakes. Fresh coffee, tea and cakes are served at the café. We regularly have children’s toys and crafts and a book stall.

Donations received for the refreshments are used to fund various projects within our community. We also have a book stall each month. This year we are donating the proceeds from the book sales to the Friends Of Granta School (FOGS).

If you would like more information please contact either of us.

Catherine Willcocks

Sherry O’Donovan.

**The West Wratting Bridge Club**

This takes place on the First Friday of the month. With an average of 12 players the group enjoy very informal games of Bridge and refreshments. Our fee of £1.50 per person per evening covers the hire of the village hall. From 7.30 until about 10pm.

Sherry O’Donovan

**West Wratting ‘Over 60’s Club**

We informally met monthly at The Chestnuts with lunch included.  With six ladies on average attending, We held only one garden meeting last year, nine were held at The Chestnuts.

Wendy Halls

Organiser

**Parish Paths Partnership**

The public footpaths were well maintained throughout the year, and the Council continues to give us two cuts, while the landowners keep the cross field paths in good order.

A problem remains along the length of Fox Road after the laying of road chippings. There has been a large increase in general litter.

We had a positive dialogue with the Romanies camped at the Weston Colville end of Fox Road, which culminated in three young litter pickers (thank you Winter, Eirlys and Rocky) spending two litter picking sessions, while the Romanies did their bit and bagged up at least 16 bin liners themselves.

Simon Anderson, who has cut the paths round the perimeters of West Wratting for many year, may be moving away during the year. We all owe Simon a huge debt of gratitude for his excellent work. At time of writing I am not sure of his departure date, but I am sure we would like to give him a big thank you and wish him and Nikki all the very best.

As always, please contact me on any path issues.

Colin McCall (Tree Officer)

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**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/busnessplan](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/busnessplan)

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 year ago, the then minority Lib Dem Group, put a motion to Council proposing this but is 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 refocussed 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.

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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).