



# Westhoughton Community Network

**Meeting: Wednesday, 10th May 2023 (7:00pm)**

at Lostock Cricket Club

## Minutes

### 1. Present

Groups represented (11) | Individuals in attendance (14) | Apologies (7)

### 2. Welcome/Apologies

Chairing the meeting, Chris Buckley welcomed those present to the impressive Lostock Cricket Club Clubhouse, then thanked David Kaye and Ian Raby from the club for their time and efforts in hosting and for providing generous hospitality for the meeting. A special note of congratulations to David Kaye on his recent 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and 60-year cricketing involvement milestones (cake was given out).

There was a quick review of from the last meeting including references to Urban Outreach, Community Rail Trails (tried out and enjoyed by Colin Gradwell), and a special Wingates Band 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert at Bolton Albert Halls.

Apologies were noted. Unfortunately, a key item on this evening's agenda has had to be deferred as Westhoughton Community Police were due to attend but were dealing with arrests over recent damage to cars in the town centre.

With the Local Elections out of the way, the room joined the Chair in congratulating David Chadwick (HEART) on his election to [Bolton Council](#) – securing most votes, he will serve four years in office.

### 3. The Hub at Westhoughton

Anna-Marie Watters was introduced to give an overview and update on the Central Drive community centre. First giving out a leaflet showing all the weekly activities and groups using the former college. Taken over by 'Westhoughton Vision' in September 2017, there have been some ups and downs along the way, however even with Lockdown interruptions, organisers have remained positive and up for the challenge – indicators of success being increased footfall (2,500 per week) and turnover going from £40k pre-Covid to £182k this year. In 2021, having met all the required criteria, 'The Hub at Westhoughton' became a registered charity, opening up other possibilities for the community enterprise.

With an effective business plan they are able to run the Hub on 90% self-generated income, with a further 10% coming from funding ('smile money' used for free-of-charge community projects and activities); this gives them security of tenure and longer-term sustainability.

A recent successful £10k National Lottery bid will fund the creation of an all-year-round well-equipped sensory garden in a former courtyard.

With a wide range of activities going on (both HUB-run and third party) five paid staff and volunteers make a point of ensuring that the Hub at Westhoughton is a welcoming and friendly place for children and families especially, and one they will want to come back to. The youngest user is 6 months old, the oldest 99. There is a café – 'HUBway'. Children's activities aim to have an educational and/or novel element to them. For 3 years they have been involved in Bolton Council's summer DoE-funded #HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) Programme.



# Westhoughton Community Network

Looking forward, they are hoping to expand and increase their offering, including taking over the whole site and putting on youth-oriented supervised and targeted activities in the evening. It would be an opportunity for biggest user and popular Aspire Dance & Stage to grow with more space.

Further ahead special events are to be run including fundays, Halloween, Artisan and Christmas markets. All the time working with the wider community to support Westhoughton.

Anna-Marie finished by saying how proud they are of what has been achieved from a standing start, the teamwork and how grateful they are for the support along the way. The room was very impressed by the evident passion shown and work done to make the Hub at Westhoughton a success.

Anna said people are welcome to visit and have a look around, saying there will be an Open Day for when the new Sensory Garden is built; also a children's Art Exhibition.

## 4. Westhoughton Local History Group (WLHG) – Historical Archives

David Kaye was asked to talk about the local history group and the historical archives and collections housed in the library building. First giving some context, WLHG first formed in 2005 and has grown greatly since. Members of the *Lancashire Local History Federation* which numbered some 80 heritage and niche historical organisations; WLHG is regarded as one of the largest, most active and innovative of the groups – last year hosting the 'At Home' event celebrating its work and local historical knowledge.

After the furore over the Town Hall and Civic complex and the 'invasion' of the group's Facebook with wild claims and misinformation, the group needed to address and reassure regarding tenure and historical archives, memorabilia and collections (statement issued 18/3/23). The Upper Floor of the library is home to local heritage; being a growing town with a majority unaware of its historical significance, it was important to take stock and protect these precious and valuable assets - the situation being quite complex with different ownership and management (three bodies)...

For example, during the refurbishment works when the library was closed, the glass case exhibits (loans or donations), which are in the curacy [care] of *Bolton History Centre* (Library & Museums), were individually wrapped and indexed (observed by WLHG) for temporary storage elsewhere (since returned as was).

A Local Studies (History) Area comprises books, pamphlets, leaflets, files and maps is in the curacy of Library Services.

Westhoughton Local History Group has its own archives and accumulated materials from research and exhibitions, collated and stored and can be retrieved from there. There are two special features: the Westhoughton Historical Timeline displays (dedicated to the memory of group founder Pam Clarke), and commissioned from local artist Andy Smith for the 2010 centenary, a large artwork evoking the trauma of the Pretoria Mining Disaster (1910) - '*Ast Sin Me Dad?*'

The disruption of the refurbishment closure necessitated some reorganising for meetings using Cornerstone Church and the Hub, but they are glad to be home and settled at the Library. David concluding by saying no matter what happens to the civic buildings, nothing will be lost or disrespected and that WLHG is being fully consulted.

*There was a short break for refreshments and networking*



# Westhoughton Community Network

## 5. Town Hall and Market Street Update

There was a brief mention of the local election campaign and the misinformation put out over the Town Hall façade being demolished and glazed, when all that was to be proposed was the lengthening of four (of nine) of the ground floor windows – the aim being to let in more light to the new spaces being created and connect better with Market Street. [[Town Hall Investment Summary](#)]

It is hoped to have the Principal Project Officer back for a future meeting once the new Council governance is in place. It was confirmed that, after scrutiny, the funding for the Town Hall works is now in place to get on with the internal works. Work on £2.3m Market Street new public realm scheme (Phase I), agreed in 2021, is now in progress and on schedule (completion November). [[Market Street Remodelling](#)] Pavement work to be done in sections to minimise disruption with the south side (Wetherspoons) done first, then working back along the north side towards the Town Hall. It should look smart and refreshed when finished. A deal has been done with Silcock's for use of their Mill Street land for the duration storage and site offices – this dialogue a good thing longer term town centre needs?

## 6. Information Share

**Cornerstone ADS** (Colin Gradwell). Things are going well; pleasingly some new members joining the drama group. A Murder Mystery run recently completed, which was a great success. A new caterer found that they are impressed with... In September, giving all the troupe a chance to be involved, the shows will be two one-act comedies each evening. Cinderella is to be the 2024 panto (February). Colin mentioned that **Cornerstone Church** is still waiting for the Bethel Church future to be resolved and its sale to go through (new buyer sought) for funds to reach them following the LEP merger for necessary remedial work at Wigan Road to take place.

**Bethel Crowd** (Jason Taylor) is working on two shows: firstly, in September, penned by Gruffalo author Julie Donaldson, a war-time, northern history drama 'Bombs and Blackberries', with second act made up of World War II song performances. They are happy to be planning their first panto in four years – Rapunzel – which will be performed at in February. They are to use St. James (High School) Farnworth again – still no suitable space available in Westhoughton. Casting for both shows taking place at the Hub at Westhoughton: an Open Evening (Friday 2/6) and Auditions (Sunday 4/6).

Beforehand, the Bethel Crowd, in memory of two of their own (Lillian Bumby and Danielle Hampson), is taking part in a charity event for Breast Cancer Now, 'Music From the Heart' on 20/5 at Blackrod Community Centre.

The spirit of the camp remains positive with rehearsals taking place at the Hub, in the hope that a new home for performances can be found before too long.

**Westhoughton Local History Group** (David Kaye). Group is doing well, in contrast with many heritage groups hit by Covid Lockdowns and a loss of momentum; their profile of older committee members not helping. Nearby groups at Atherton, Hindley, Worsley have folded. Here, WLHG managed to adapt and keep going using Zoom to connect and staying focused. The monthly third Thursday meetings at the library sees some 75 attend (very good for a heritage group) with guest and in-house speakers giving interesting talks, e.g., Alan Davis (a local expert on Pretoria) enlightening members about 'Duke of Bridgewater's underground coal mining canals' (18/5)... There are occasional trips and special projects. This year for the Heritage Open Days Event in September (9<sup>th</sup>- 16<sup>th</sup>) the group will be doing an exhibition with the central theme of Wingates Band in its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary year; the story of the brass band, with elements that link it to the town, such as the Pretoria Pit Disaster, the war years... There will be live music



# Westhoughton Community Network

and Jim Berry of the Houghton Weavers will be performing underlining the links between the two local musical legends.

**Friends of Eatock Lodge** (Chris Buckley). Nature thriving with spring in the air with the resident swans (Cassandra and Apollo) soon to be parents for the third time. New clutch due later on in May. It was explained that the cygnets get tagged, and when chased away by the parents the group can get reports on the whereabouts as they progress through life. Their arrival has boosted interest and appreciation in both nature and the lodge.

With money from the Town Council (no Bolton Council Parks Manager still following a retirement a year ago), the group has organised and undertaken some maintenance and conservation tasks – professionals and volunteers. Some additional benches, funded by the group, to be added. Occasional events such as bird and nature walks to be put on.

**Hope Church** (Mark Taylor). Based at the Hub at Westhoughton where services take place, congregation continues to grow. They enjoyed going out and about and giving out Easter eggs to people. They are hoping to do a summer Funday using the Hub front carpark. They are running Alpha courses, which, open to all, give an introduction to Christianity and are held at the Mercury motel. Over summer, church services are every other week, with local walks/picnics in between.

**Friends of Westhoughton Station** (Steve Freeborn). A lovely time of the year – colours are spectacular! Steve enthused at how popular the Facebook page is with many positive and encouraging comments. The core group of a dozen volunteers are out in all weathers on a Sunday morning; numbers doing tasks at the station vary. They did a Coronation display; annoyingly the flag was stolen! There is now garden gnome area looked after by Maureen (Jason's mum), which is growing with all the gifts and donations. Things are going well, more volunteers welcome to help with digging, planting and tidying. Electrification work and its impact is an unknown, though there will be longer platforms and more scope for their displays, providing the area is cleared properly after the works!

With daughter Susan (Missin) in attendance, Steve mentioned *Harold Daniels Memorial Garden* at the station, and the lovely comments about him following a photo posted on their Facebook.

**Lostock Cricket Club** (David Kaye). Thanks to the efforts of all involved the club is thriving... David shared an information sheet giving some history of the club from being established in 1938 as a Corporate Cricket Club, surviving factory closure and loss of a base, becoming independent, and eventually finding this new home and being settled at Chew Moor in 2017, able to focus on the club's development and wider sporting and community connections. As with many groups, Lockdowns stalled any momentum. Today there are 7 teams (3 senior), and a vibrant youth offering (juniors teams ages <9, <11, <13 and <15), as well as an 'All Stars' summer course which introduces 5-8 year olds to cricket. The fully-licenced clubhouse is being used more and more for events and functions, including coming up a 'Folk & Brass' reunion between the Houghton Weavers and Wingates Band (19/5). Summer being a nice time to enjoy a pint and watch some cricket... paradise says David!

## 7. Any Other Business

A couple of items brought to the room's attention by the Chair...

- **Poppy Appeal 2023** – the Royal British Legion is looking for a Poppy Appeal Organiser for Westhoughton to find volunteers and take on the duties involving running the local campaign (stock orders, rotas, handing donations). Previously run by the Rotary Club's George Davis until retirement,



# Westhoughton Community Network

it was taken over last year, unfortunately the 2022 organisers are busy with new projects and have asked RBL to step in. The Poppy Appeal is a big civic event for Westhoughton, with the Town Clerk playing a significant role; townsfolk always contribute generously and turn out for Remembrance Sunday. Hopefully it can be rescued. RBL contact is Steve Conneely (07955 311438) for more information/criteria.

- **Bolton Lads and Girls Club** – an update via Daniel Schofield (Head of Play, Youth & Sport). With some disruption over the summer due to water damage (roof), use of the Central Drive building ceased in October 2022 with activities transitioning to the new 'Infinity' building; efforts to promote and draw Westhoughton youth to use facilities and programmes (sport, emotional health and well-being) offered at 'Infinity' (Project Night 5<sup>th</sup> June).

Work to take place (Q223) to stem internal water damage and make some repairs; however, the building would need a new roof before any re-opening – leaks and flooding had been an ongoing issue for BLGC. We acknowledged BLGC's good work in Westhoughton since its arrival in 2015. We have asked Danny to keep us up-to-date on developments and offerings for Westhoughton youth.

The Chair, noting that it had been an enjoyable meeting with much humour, thanked people for attending and their contributions, Secretary Ann Benn for taking minutes – and a special thanks to Lostock Cricket Club (Ian Raby and David Kaye) for their kind and generous hospitality.

## 8. Next Meeting

Westhoughton Community Network will next meet at:

**Cornerstone Church Hall on Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**

Meeting finished at 8:50pm.

[WesthoughtonCommunityNetwork.co.uk](http://WesthoughtonCommunityNetwork.co.uk)

[facebook.com/westhoughton.net](https://facebook.com/westhoughton.net)

---

### Attendance & apologies

Groups represented (11)

- Bethel Crowd ■ Cornerstone ADS ■ Cornerstone Church ■ Friends of Eatock Lodge
- Friends of Westhoughton Station ■ Harold Daniels Legacy Fund ■ HEART ■ Hope Church
- Hub at Westhoughton ■ Lostock Cricket Club ■ Westhoughton Local History Group

Individuals in attendance (14)

- Trevor Benn (FoEL) ■ David Chadwick (HEART) ■ Val Chadwick (WLHG) ■ Stephen Freeborn (FWS)
- Colin Gradwell (CADS) ■ David Kaye (WLHG/LCC) ■ Brian Leyden (FWS) ■ Susan Missin (HDLF)
- Ian Raby (LCC) ■ Jason Taylor (BETHEL) ■ Mark Taylor (HOPE) ■ Anna-Marie Watters (HUB)
- Ann Benn (FoEL) SECRETARY ■ Chris Buckley (WCN) CHAIR

Apologies (7)

- Dave Hendry (Westhoughton Art Group) ■ Phil Lamb (Bolton Council - Regeneration)
- Carol Pharaoh (St. Bartholomew's Church) ■ Gill Williams (Daisy Hill in Bloom)
- Joy Mooney (Wingates Band) ■ PC Joseph Barker (Greater Manchester Police)
- Jack Speight (Friends of Daisy Hill Station/Westhoughton Allotments and Gardens Society)