



# Westhoughton Community Network

**Meeting: Wednesday, 14th September 2022 (6:30pm)**

at Winifred Kettle Day Centre

## Minutes

### 1. Present

#### Groups represented (17)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Bethel Crowd (BCD)                    | 10. Lostock Cricket Club (LCC)                        |
| 2. Cornerstone ADS (CADS)                | 11. St. James (Daisy Hill) (SJC)                      |
| 3. Daisy Hill in Bloom (DHiB)            | 12. Senior Solutions (SNS)                            |
| 4. Friends of Daisy Hill Station (FDHS)  | 13. Travellin' Strings (TST) / JET (JET)              |
| 5. Friends of Eatock Lodge (FoEL)        | 14. Westhoughton Local History Group (WLHG)           |
| 6. Friends of Westhoughton Station (FWS) | 15. Westhoughton Garden and Allotments Society (WGAS) |
| 7. Harold Daniels Legacy Fund (HDLF)     | 16. Westhoughton Golf Club (WGC)                      |
| 8. Hope Church (HOPE)                    | 17. Women of Westhoughton (WOW)                       |
| 9. Howfen Radio (HR)                     |   |

#### Individuals in attendance (18)

|                        |                           |                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Janice Bayliss (WOW)   | David Kaye (WLHG/LCC)     | Jason Taylor (BCD)        |
| David Chadwick (HEART) | Susan Missin (HDLF)       | Michelle Todd (SNS)       |
| Val Chadwick (WLHG)    | Peter Schofield (BCD)     | Gill Williams (DHiB)      |
| Tim Eden (TS/JET/WGC)  | Jack Speight (FoDHS/WGAS) | Kirsty Wilssdon (SNS)     |
| Stephen Freeborn (FWS) | Veronica Swinburne (DHiB) | James Young (SJC)         |
| Colin Gradwell (CASD)  | Mark Taylor (HOPE)        | Chris Buckley (WCN) CHAIR |

#### Apologies (7)

Ann Benn, Trevor Benn (Friends of Eatock Lodge); Brian Leyden (Friends of Westhoughton Station); Steve Harrington (Rotary Club of Westhoughton); Joy Mooney (Wingates Band) Elsa Parker (Co-op in Community); Ian Templeman (Daisy Hill FC).



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## 2. Welcome/Apologies

After something of a hiatus in terms of us getting together as a group, taking on chairing duties for this 'catch-up' meeting Chris Buckley welcomed those present and thanked Michelle and Kirsty of Senior Solutions for arranging the venue and taking care of refreshments for the break. Special welcome to newcomer James Young (St. James (Daisy Hill)) and Susan Missin (Harold Daniels' daughter) who had travelled from Leeds to be with us. There were a few apologies.

We quickly went around the room with introductions and groups represented.

## 3. Information Share

Chris Buckley began stating that it has been a strange couple of years, but was glad to see things getting back to normal. **Westhoughton Community Network** has been ticking over... involvement in the Town Centre Regeneration Project as a member of the Steering Group – quite a bit of information about this on the website.

**Friends of Eatock Lodge** - the Local Nature Reserve being quite a draw during times of Lockdown. With the arrival of a pair of breeding swans, now onto their second family of cygnets, it has been fascinating and interesting for people to watch nature in action and the cycle of life progress. The cygnets get ringed and named, and people have grown very fond of them. Some organised activity - conservation work and litter-picking - though no big events. Unfortunately, there is something of a void following the retirement of the Bolton Council Officer overseeing LNRs and the ability to deal with site issues. Not too bad for anti-social behaviour, though use of nitrous oxide continues, the small silver capsules replaced by large café-sized tanks.

**Westhoughton Garden and Allotment Society** – a new group introduced by Jack Speight, who wanted to use his long-experience of gardening and to pool local knowledge and expertise to promote gardening and care of displays in public spaces. The group meets the third Thursday of the month at the John Holt Centre (7pm), will have interesting speakers (15/9/22 – Harry Barton: *The Importance of Bees*) and allow people to share gardening tips. Going forward they will look to take on gardening and allotment projects.

The discussion touched on the *Flower, Fruit and Vegetable* shows put on by **Daisy Hill in Bloom** (Gill Williams) and the awards events for best gardens held at the former community centre on Hartford Road. Put on for 4 years, it was a lot of work for a small number of people and the group now concentrates on the planters and keeping the village tidy (family oriented litter-picking events which usually coincide with St. James Church 'Open Doors' coffee mornings). One little thing they used to do was pop a thank you note through letterboxes for well-kept gardens brightening up the village. They currently meet when necessary at Daisy Hill Cricket Club, which has been very supportive. The group receives £1,000 a year in funding from Westhoughton Town Council (reimbursed if not spent). More help and volunteers would allow the group to do more. Colin Gradwell congratulated Daisy Hill in



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Bloom and the two Friends Station groups for the fantastic displays this year – in spite of the drought!

Janice Bayliss gave an update on **WOW (Women of Westhoughton)** which has now been going some 9 years (May 2013). Coming out of Covid, with the loss of the Hope Centre as a venue the group struggled to find somewhere to meet – the dearth of local meeting venues has become a problem – eventually settling on the John Holt Centre for their weekly Thursday evening (7pm) sessions (speakers, crafts, games...). On the third Thursday they usually do a social outing (meal, theatre...) – a timetable space now taken up by Jack’s gardening group. Numbers have been hit during the lockdown but have stabilised to 15 or so attendees (there is still some hesitation in attending events affecting many groups). WOW supports a local charity each year and this year is raising funds for Senior Solutions with special events. New joiners are more than welcome; they can look forward to a very varied and entertaining programme and a friendly welcoming atmosphere.

**Bethel Crowd** – Peter Schofield gave an in-depth update on this youth-oriented drama and musical group. Group is in a sticky situation, and since the loss of its home at the Bethel Church in 2019 rehearsals have been taking place at Daisy Hill FC clubhouse. The first proper show in 3 years is taking place at St. James School in Farnworth – the closest venue they could find to Westhoughton! A much-delayed, long-time rehearsed (including via Zoom) musical revue show ‘You Still Can’t Stop The Beat’ – performances 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> September ([tickets](#)). Unfortunately being outside Westhoughton ticket sales are half what they would expect for a Bethel show. This puts financial pressure on the group and they expect to make a loss of £1,000 on this show (first loss in its 50-year history), however it is important that they get back on stage. Youngest performer is 8 years old oldest 71. Peter expressed frustration and sadness that there are not better facilities for arts and theatre performance in the town; and also that they were unable to book the Carnegie Hall in advance during Covid being told it was completely unavailable. They need a big room and would hire a pop-up stage if necessary... they have chairs, lights and sound equipment.

It was suggested contacting Westhoughton High School which has an arts theatre, Peter had already tried but they aren’t hiring it out at the moment; we also learned that many school halls are hired out by a third-party management company (one which went bust during Lockdown). David Chadwick, a Governor at WHS, has offered to make some enquiries... The spacious ‘Family Church’ (ex-Pentecostal), Bolton Road, used by Senior Solutions until recently, was also suggested.

Peter finished with details of an upcoming Quiz Night (7/10) and Nativity/Carols evening (2&3/12) both at Daisy Hill FC – tickets via Ticket Source.

**Cornerstone ADS** – Colin Gradwell. Formerly Westhoughton Methodist ADS, this drama group, going over 40 years, had a name change when the church merged with Westhoughton URC (Bethel). They have just finished a run of two one-act plays – the first new plays done for over 4 years! Boosted by six newcomers to the troupe, the show did very well. There was the panto in February. Coming up, a



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Murder Mystery, 'Who Killed the Pop Star?' 21&22/10 / Tickets £5. Rehearsals for the 2023 panto will then began. The group rehearses on a Monday evening; Colin saying that the church hall, with community space at a premium, is booked solid, meaning Colin needs to hire space at The Hub for his Chorus rehearsals on a Tuesday evening. The group is doing well with new lighting and sound facilities – and some new members. More welcome!

We welcomed back David Kaye to our fold. He first spoke for **Westhoughton Local History Group**. Pre-Covid the group was hitting highs of attendance at their twice-monthly library meetings with 80+ attendees, on occasion over 100. During Lockdown the group hung on and adjusted well with Committee meetings, then normal meetings with speakers via Zoom. One meeting back at the library in September 2021, then it was closed for refurbishment (heating, windows), this loss of their 'home' would last 12 months! Regrouping and now meeting monthly, first at Westhoughton Methodist Church and then at The Hub, and finally from 15/9 they are back at the library. Just once a month still, third Thursday from 10:30am to 12:30pm. Numbers recovering, with an interesting guest speaker programme ahead. There was a special mention for Tom Newton, who after 10 years is stepping down from doing the group's illustrations and Christmas cards (sales reaching 1,200 a year); Bill Usher, author of 'Scenes Around Howfen', is taking on the mantle with his first Christmas card offering for the group, now on sale just 60p.

David told us of a big 'Heritage and History Weekend' event taking place at the 'new' Cornerstone Church (17&18/9). Inspired by a History Group booklet 'Places of Historic Interest in Westhoughton' (£6) and a folio publication 'The Story of the Wesley Stone'. This joint exhibition with displays, speakers and video will showcase the history of both the Methodist Church and United Reformed Church (Bethel) and their contributions to the Westhoughton community as a celebration to launch the new Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP). David pointedly stating that as congregations fall and churches struggle and need to reorganise we lose that vital space for drama groups and other activities – of the 10 late 18<sup>th</sup> century John Wesley-inspired churches in Westhoughton there are just 2 left.

David then gave an update on new WCN member **Lostock Cricket Club** (est. 1938) which moved into its Chew Moor base in 2017. As well as the cricket ground, there are 2 football pitches (one added after the rugby club folded) and a lovely new clubhouse that can cater for functions for up to 80 people which is doing well. Clubhouse open just Friday in winter but 5 nights plus match days in season. David extended to WCN the offer of hosting a future meeting.

**Hope Church** – Mark Taylor. The church has been around in Westhoughton some 10 years based at the Hope Centre, building adjacent to The Hub, with a goal of not just worship but being part of the community and able to offer space to groups for meetings and events. Unfortunately, the condition of the building (leased from Bolton Council) was such that significant remedial work was needed for it to be used. Then Covid struck and the church moved out, and another community hub was lost. Mark thinks it unlikely, as little progress has been made with the Council, that they will return. During Covid, like many organisations, the Hope Church



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wondered how it would survive, however it has persevered and it is doing well with a good congregation; now holding Sunday morning 10am services and gatherings in The Hub. Still planning to do events like fundays and Christmas Carols services, but they would like to find a new home/building and support the community as before. Peter Schofield added, like the Bethel where £½m of remedial work was needed to carry on, it was the building not the people that became the intractable problem. Rumours circulating of The Hub being razed and houses built on the site were unfounded, the uncertainty relates to the Hope Centre building - The Hub is doing well.

**St. James (Daisy Hill)** – James Young sent by the PCC to re-establish the links with the community following some changes and the break. The Church is having a fundraising Quiz at Daisy Hill Cricket Club Friday 14/10 and will hold its Christmas Fayre on Saturday 19/11. The first Saturday of the month 10am to 12 noon is 'Open Doors' when people can drop in for a cuppa, cake, book stall and visit the Grade II\* listed church. The church is looking to repeat more of the joint events with the community such as the History Group Heritage Open Day of a few years ago. Coming soon, and working with the school, a Wednesday morning 'Wiggle Worship', a new fun and fresh way of encouraging mothers and toddlers into church after the school drop-off. They are keen to do more with the community; James too as a teacher at St. George Primary offers his support there. James was asked about the Classical Concert series which brought some culture to Westhoughton giving young musicians a chance to perform and which was derailed by lockdowns... the PCC is looking at it again, but their return depends upon demand and cost – like many venues heating costs will now be a significant factor in putting things on.

Steve Freeborn, author of bestselling Amazon book on pharmaceutical tales 'Keep on Taking the Tablets' (also available for speaker events), did an update on **Friends of Westhoughton Station**... ticking along after 10 years, doing well and the dedicated volunteers doing a great job of brightening up the station with their plants and features – the embankment makes some of the work more difficult. Steve gave an update on electrification though Westhoughton with the power lines coming towards the end of this year and then electric trains improving the service (some bridges have been raised to accommodate this). He mentioned involvement in a walk being planned: a 13-mile walking route between Wigan and Bolton stations passing through Borsdane Wood, this station and then Chew Moor and on... it is a work in progress but looks good and people will be able to walk parts of or even all of it.

**Senior Solutions** – Michelle Todd. It has been going 25 years now, the service needed more than ever. When Michelle started in 2016 they had 120 people and some 30 volunteers, now they support 235 clients. The support they need to give is greater as post-Covid some services haven't come back. They have definitely noted changes in people's wellbeing and needs since Lockdown. There is more demand and greater challenges; some upheaval due to staff changes but a couple of excellent new recruits in Kirsty and Kath. Still offering the befriending service which now extends out to Horwich taking over from a service that folded; weekly visits



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have doubled this year since January (to 80). Referrals are up to about 15 a month from 5 or 6 when Michelle started. They are making best use of the Winifred Kettle and its facilities: Lunch Club is back and Tuesday Social Group is doing well (some special events too *bringing trips to clients* – Jubilee celebration, Summer Fair, Greek Day, Theatre Day and a Hallowe'en party and Christmas Fair coming up); a new monthly Carers Group is to start up to give carers some respite and mutual support. There is also an allotment they can use at Ashgrove, and with volunteers doing their bit, it is great bringing back home-grown food to the clients. The organisation is meeting the challenges, adapting and making good use of its staff and volunteers, but is conscious of being overstretched which would hit its service levels; and whilst being back in and using the Winifred Kettle is great, should Day Care return, there is an issue of where would Senior Solutions go to provide its much needed services and support? They are doing their best and are positive, but there are uncertainties: funding, space, transport, complexity of needs...

Tim Eden – talk of venues reminded him of all the gigs **The Travellin' Strings** did supporting the community and fundraising for Alzheimer's, over £20,000 raised before they decided to call it a day just after Covid. Out of the ashes a new trio formed **J.E.T.** who have been gigging and supporting the community; one such event was the W.A.S.P. Christmas Party 2021 with Wilf Dillon present. Sadly Wilf passed away just 2-months short of his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and Tim remarked how he will be much-missed, a sentiment echoed in the room. J.E.T. are happy to support community events and fundraising activity with their smaller set-up and expanded set-list. There are costs associated with gigging but any charge will be nominal for a good cause. Whilst Tim, like Jason Taylor, no longer presents on **Howfen Radio**, the Hub-based station is continuing with its community output. Tim has found himself organising social events at **Westhoughton Golf Club** which has a big room and bar and food facilities; he will make enquiries with the owners on behalf of community groups needing space or somewhere to put on an event at a nominal cost.

Former WCN Chair Harold Daniels' daughter, Susan Missin, who enjoys coming along to our meetings, gave an update on mum who is now in sheltered accommodation with others in Bolton but doing well, her daughter fundraising for BRAKE, the road safety charity, doing the Great North Run in Newcastle and raising £1,500 in grandad's name... The **Harold Daniels Legacy Fund** set-up with the intention of sharing money between the two things close to dad's heart – Melbourne Road Methodist Church in Deane and Westhoughton causes. The church was forced to close in January 2020, thankfully with a nice send-off but sadly things the fund paid for have been returned. This means what is left in the pot will go to Westhoughton causes, preferably longer-term capital investment rather than one-offs. Susan mentioned the Queen's Jubilee Tree Canopy Project wondering if it reached Westhoughton – it did, an area in Wingates and a smaller scale effort at Eatock Lodge with the Friends group and Daisy Hill in Bloom doing the planting. Steve Freeborn mentioned Harold's planter memorial at Westhoughton Station, sharing fond memories of Harold.



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To end the meeting Chris Buckley, who is on the Steering Group, did an update and overview of the **Town Centre Regeneration Project** which was launched with a WCN presentation by Regeneration Officer Phil Lamb back in September 2019. The topic has been covered here as the project has gone along, and there is information about community involvement and various documentation on our website.

From a community point of view the plans for the Library and Carnegie Hall are very positive in that there will be two large rooms on the upper floor to accommodate meeting and events. With the removal of the stairs from the library a room larger than the Carnegie will be created which we hope can be made suitable for performance such that the Bethel Crowd may have somewhere to go – information to that effect has been submitted. It is not a given, and whilst the space would be great for public meetings and exhibitions, it is a compromise solution for performance. Removal of the stairs also creates more room in the library which can help with the relocation of the ‘museum’ type displays on the upper floor. The intention for the upper floor is for it to be independent of the library and thus available any time, and with a better booking system making hiring of the space easier.

The intention for the Town Hall, a building that has fallen out of use and was in need of significant change internally to bring it up-to-date, was always for mixed use (civic, business and retail) such that it would be an economically viable proposition and provide a boost to the town centre.

There followed a discussion on points raised and concerns were voiced that some of the furore being created around the Town Hall and the misrepresentation of the facts could stifle the progress of plans for the library building with an already limited budget for what needs to be done.

The intention with these civic buildings, which had a separate funding pot from Market Street, was for plans to be formally brought forward later this year and for the public to get to see them and comment. We hope to get the regeneration people back to WCN for an update in the near future.

At the end there was a mention of **Wingates Brass Band** and changes there ahead of the big 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. We are hoping for some good things to celebrate this achievement and milestone.

Chris thanked everybody for their attendance and contributions, stating that it was nice to have people together again in such a convivial atmosphere after a long and often difficult period for the country – and especially local communities. We soldiered on, and as Colin Gradwell concluded: “We are still here!”

Meeting finished at 8:10pm.

*Date of next meeting to be confirmed.*

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

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