



Westhoughton Community Network

Meeting: Wednesday, 21st September 2021 | 7:00pm
at John Holt Centre

Minutes

1. Present

Groups and Organisations Represented (13)

1. Friends of Eatock Lodge (FoEL)
2. Friends of Westhoughton Station (FoWS)
3. Harold Daniels Legacy Fund (HDLF)
4. HEART (HRT)
5. Hindleys and Clough Farm Residents Association (HACFRA)
6. Rotary Club of Westhoughton (RCW)
7. Senior Solutions (SenSol)
8. Westhoughton Golf Club (WGC)
9. Westhoughton Local History Group (WLHG)
10. Westhoughton Methodist ADS (WMADS)
11. Westhoughton Methodist Church (WMC)
12. Westhoughton Town Council (WTC)
13. Westhoughton Active Volunteers Enterprise (WAVE)

Individuals in attendance (13)

Trevor Benn (FoEL)	Steve Harrington (RCW)	Michelle Todd (SenSol)
David Chadwick (HEART/WLHG)	Brian Leyden (FWS)	Ann Benn (FoEL) SECRETARY
Doug Cunliffe (HACFRA/WAVE)	Julie Loughran (SenSol)	Chris Buckley (WCN) CHAIR
Stephen Freeborn (FWS)	Susan Missin (HDLF)	
Colin Gradwell (WMADS/WMC)	Lisa Reilly (WTC/WGC)	

Apologies (9)

Janice Bayliss (Women of Westhoughton); Johnny Crook (Westhoughton Poetry Group); Sandra Greenall (Westhoughton Community Royalty); Glenys Latham (St. James Church); Joy Mooney (Wingates Band); Bob Naylor, Ian Templeman (Daisy Hill FC); Elsa Parker (Co-op Members); Veronica Swinburne (Daisy Hill in Bloom); Anna-Marie Watters (Westhoughton HUB).



2. Welcome/Apologies/Review of Minutes

The meeting was chaired by Chris Buckley, who opened by welcoming all those present, and thanking Doug Cunliffe for use of the John Holt Centre and for providing refreshments. He welcomed Lisa Riley as the current Mayor of Westhoughton.

The last WCN meeting was held back in February 2020, prior to the disruption caused by the pandemic and resulting Lockdown and social distancing measures that had shut down normal community activities.

Whilst we had had an online meeting via Zoom during Lockdown last September, it was good to be able to meet again in person. Chris noted that the 9th August had been the 10th Anniversary of the establishment of Westhoughton Community Network, inaugurated at Brookfield Hall and chaired by the late Harold Daniels – at this and other meetings we've been pleased to welcome Susan Missin, Harold's daughter.

Given the long hiatus, it was decided to keep the meeting informal (and short) with a catch-up and the sharing of comments and experiences of carrying on during these strange and testing times.

3. Information Share

Senior Solutions – Michelle Todd and Julie Loughran described how they and their volunteers had made the transition from face-to-face to socially-distanced contact with clients, and how telephone contact became a lifeline for many with distant families. Volunteers helped with shopping, and provision of transport for essential appointments. A door-step approach continued throughout Lockdown. From April, with a growing number of referrals, the remit extended to Horwich. With some additional funding Senior Solutions has been able to welcome an apprentice to their numbers to get some on the job training and experience. By May a fuller service had been available. They expect to be fully-operational by mid-October with the return of the popular Tuesday afternoon social group once a suitable venue has been sorted, and *Ring and Ride* services are available again. Luncheon Clubs remain limited due to restrictions at residential homes. Access to and cultivating at an allotment has enabled clients and carers to meet outside. This year's AGM is 28th September via Zoom.

New Town Mayor, Lisa Riley, told us of her chosen charities, *Senior Solutions* and the *Rotary Club of Westhoughton*, which will benefit from any fundraising events. She has represented Westhoughton at a number of Civic events, including recently the 81st anniversary of the Battle of Britain in Bolton, and although some restrictions in activities continue, the Town Council will resume its winter events: Remembrance Day (14/11), Christmas Carols and Lights switch-on (26/11). Lisa, as Mayor, is keen to be part of local events and community group projects.

Lisa continues to be active with **Westhoughton Golf Club**, which is looking to hold more social activities and community events, with one on 15th October (7:30pm) with hot pot supper and entertainment (£5).

Westhoughton Methodist ADS - Colin Gradwell reported on ongoing activities/rehearsals which had taken place via Zoom; good he commented for those living on their own. A Murder Mystery (the first drama performance to take place



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since the panto in February 2020) 'Who Killed the Holiday Rep?' (17th & 18th September) has sold out. They will perform it again in Tonge Moor 30th October. Colin is involved with the *On The Go* theatre group which is performing 'Ways and Means', a play about Bolton Wanderers and the war years team, at the stadium 2nd November (1pm/£3). Some repairs have been needed to the stage. The group is looking forward to the 2022 Panto. New members and volunteers always welcome – they currently need someone to help with sound.

The Church has some new groups using the hall of an evening (Yoga/Keep-fit on Tuesdays and Wednesdays). A fundraising *Book Sale and Coffee Morning* is planned for 2nd October. It has also welcomed the congregation from the now closed United Reformed Church (The Bethel); drama group, The **Bethel Crowd** is currently homeless looking for a venue to perform at (they currently rehearse at Daisy Hill FC). The possibility of using the Methodist Church Hall for performances is being explored, though the practicality of sharing the small space (set, costumes...) would need resolving.

Rotary Club of Westhoughton - Steve Harrington. Rotarians kept going throughout Lockdown using Zoom; the monthly speaker events working well with some excellent and interesting talks; notably Pete Waterman, who they hope will return for another talk. They offered charitable community support sharing the proceeds of the virtual Santa Float collection with many deserving local causes; as well as delivering gifts to isolated OAPs and funding IT equipment for local primary schools.

Currently RCW is meeting twice monthly, first Thursday at Georgian House and third Thursday via Zoom. They are quite active on social media. They are helping out at *Iron Man Kids 2021* (25/9), and ahead of Remembrance Sunday will be involved in supporting the Royal British Legion Poppy Collections (collecting at Sainsbury's 6th / 13th November – more volunteers needed). Their 'Charter Night' event will take place at Georgian House Friday, 22nd October – meal and entertainment (Irish Duo), tickets £32 (public welcome).

Friends of Westhoughton Station – Steve Freeborn talked about the stopping of station activities during Lockdown, and the phenomenal amount of work waiting for them once able to work at the station once more (restrictions meant numbers limited to begin with). They are there Sunday mornings from 10am. The station is looking great with areas cleared and cut back, new plants and some new features to add interest. Still no trains stopping there on a Sunday - 12th December being the restart date.

All are excited by the line electrification announcement, which will see an extended platform, new and longer trains and an improved service. Work on the Lostock to Wigan stretch to be completed by 2024.

On a personal note, Steve's amusing tales of being a pharmacist, '[Keep Taking the Tablets](#)', is still selling well.

There was a short break for refreshments

After the break the Chair gave some quick updates by proxy:



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Daisy Hill in Bloom had a first meeting on 20/9/21, and will have a new way of working that is more independent of the Town Council (reporting annually as to how its grants are used). Plant displays were kept going; the group will be doing winter bedding plant displays. **St. James Church** (Daisy Hill) held *Heritage Open Days* in September both online and in person, with historical displays, videos and educational activities. **Wingates Band** is able to rehearse and perform again; an enjoyable open-air concert with fireworks took place at Westhoughton Cricket Club; generous collection box donations of £824 gratefully received. **Daisy Hill FC** is back playing football at New Sirs, with a new management team and signings, and has seen the clubhouse refurbished. WCN will submit the occasional community article to home match programmes. **Women of Westhoughton (WOW)** now meet at the John Holt Centre (Thursdays, 7pm), with a new programme of activities and social events. After 15 months of isolation and shielding OAP group **W.A.S.P.** was pleased to be back the John Holt Centre for its weekly Monday afternoon bingo sessions (no Thursday session as yet due to closure of Winifred Kettle Day Care Centre). The **George Formby Society**, following a move to the Conservative Club, are meeting again for its last-Wednesday-of-month get-togethers celebrating the music of the Ukulele Man.

Friends of Eatock Lodge – Chris Buckley. The Local Nature Reserve has been popular throughout this period with people enjoying the outdoors and wildlife. Whilst organised activities have been limited – a big community litter pick in February (40 bags of rubbish collected!), some bird song and nature walks with Colin Gradwell – nature has flourished and new family of swans (four cygnets, recently tagged) has been a star attraction. Due to ongoing uncertainty a Family Funday was not possible. There have been some issues with vandalism and litter, which the group is trying to keep on top of. It is hoped that with funding from the Town Council, managers can organise some repairs and overdue maintenance/conservation work.

HEART - David Chadwick gave an update on revised plans ([12218/21](#)) by Peel Holdings for Hulton Park now encompassing Lee Hall (1,036 houses plus other amenities including a new primary school). The development has the proviso of a successful Ryder Cup bid, about which the group remains sceptical. HEART is campaigning actively against this development and loss of historic green belt and agricultural land. The plans will see a road through Lee Hall to the A6 (not the Chequerbent roundabout) and then junction 5 of the M61 – the road will open up the rest of Lee Hall and Gibfield to further housing development.

This promoted a discussion on the perennial issue of over-development in Westhoughton... There was frustration voiced over the number of large and small housing developments – accelerating since the adopted 2011 Bolton Local Plan gave way to the *Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (now Places For Everyone)* – pressure on infrastructure and services, the loss of green hinterland stopping urban sprawl and the lack of investment for new bespoke community facilities. It was noted that sites at Lee Hall, Bowlands Hey and Ditchers Farm (previously *Protected Open Land*) that found themselves in the GMSF first draft but were then withdrawn, are all being developed...



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The loss of the Bethel Church (home to the Bethel Crowd), the Hope Centre and Winifred Kettle being out of action, and uncertainty over the Carnegie Hall, all detrimental to community life. Westhoughton has long needed investment in a venue that could cater for larger events such as shows and exhibitions – the Gaiety site, which has a planning application for a residential development (not the best option for a town centre location that becoming more vibrant and social), would have been ideal for a new civic and community, multi-purpose building. The Gaiety (and Mill Street) sites were removed from the recent £4m [Town Centre Regeneration consultation](#), which is focusing on Market Street ambient/pedestrian improvements and some investment in Central Park...

The Chair made reference to the Blackrod Community Centre, which whilst not a new building, is a sizeable space with a stage and flexible enough to be used for concerts, meetings, exhibitions, functions and even indoor sports. It has a capacity of 175 (150 if tables used).

Whilst WCN does not get involved in politics, it was felt we should say something as a community body and question levels of investment and share of the monetary gains from all the development: Section 106, local public land sales and extra taxes.

Dave Chadwick then continued with an update from **Westhoughton Local History Group**, which had continued virtually over the Lockdown with speaker events and the committee meeting to discuss projects including the new publication 'Westhoughton Places of Historic Interest', telling with illustrations and maps the story of 60 of the most interesting and significant buildings in our town (£6). Two new blue historic plaques are being planned; and, after much work, a new [website](#) is now online giving access to the group's accumulated research on local history, exhibition archives and a variety of maps and illustrations. The 2021 WLHG fundraising Christmas card with artwork by Tom Newton is now available - [enquiries](#).

Susan Missin, **Harold Daniels Legacy Fund**, gave a brief update on both family and the fund. The Chair commented that her dad would be proud of her continued interest and involvement in WCN.

Doug Cunliffe, **John Holt Centre**, gave a brief update with the centre now back in action and a new MUGA (sports area) and outdoor gym. An official opening will take place in the future. There are some issues with anti-social behaviour which continue to frustrate.

The shorter than usual meeting ended at 8:20pm, though, glad to have the chance to get together as a group, many took the opportunity to catch up.

Providing a venue is available, we will look to hold a Wednesday meeting towards the end of November – to be confirmed.

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