



West Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum AGM

Held on 24th November 2014 at 8 p.m.

At St John's Church West Byfleet.

Joint chair report.

This is the first Annual General Meeting of the West Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum and we would like to thank the new vicar here at St John's, Chris Hollingshurst for allowing us the use of this lovely church, Chris is very sorry that he cannot be with us tonight. Also we would like to give a big thank you to Geff Jones, the church warden, who has helped us set up this meeting.

So let go back a year to last November.....after our initial public meeting about 50 residents signed up to be members of the forum and of those 15 residents volunteered to form a committee.

Since last November the committee has met monthly, usually with one of our councillors in attendance. Our meetings were originally held at the WB Social club. Then we were offered the free use of the partners meeting room above the shop at Waitrose which we gladly accepted.

There have been and are many challenges in setting up a Forum.

It is a new concept not just for the committee but for Woking Council and for you as a resident, has anyone asked you before how you would like our community to develop over the next 10 years or so.?

As some of you may remember the first major issue we faced was to agree a boundary with the Pyrford Forum. A meeting was held with the two forum committees and after a very lively and at times noisy debate in the end both sides agreed to use a line roughly based on the old Parish Boundary of Wisley with Pyrford as our boundary. This was for both forums a compromise.

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Both Forums could now move on, we were now able to present our application, constitution and neighbourhood map to WBC in December. Our application was in the public domain for 8 weeks, only one comment was made and so the application was presented to a full committee meeting of the Woking Council; the application was agreed and we became an official Forum in 27th March this year. We are 'licenced' for 5 years.

The next challenge was communication and how to become known around the village.

The Forum's distinctive green and white logo was created by Emma Davis.

And we thank Mark Fuller who has set up our own webpage; this is up dated with details of our meetings and also information about current issues in our village. Messages can be left and new members can join via the webpage. Mark has also just set up our own Facebook page.

Another form of communication is the Residents' Association magazine which is delivered three times a year to over 40% of the households in West Byfleet and always carries an article on our Forum.

We also display notices on our three village notice boards. We have also attended local events most recently the St John's Church Autumn Fair.

After discussion with the West Byfleet Library staff and at their suggestion we now have a 'Community Corner' where all hard copies of documents relating to the Forum, the RA and Woking Bough Council's public information documents may now be found

Our next challenge was to get to know and understand more about how West Byfleet functions. We invited members of the Byfleet United Charities along to a meeting and learnt that the charity owns over 23 acres of land in our village including Stoop Court, the school and the Camphill Industrial Estate. At another meeting we invited a member of the West Byfleet Business Association along and looked at their draft document 'West Byfleet A vision for the Future'. We also met with a Health Centre Practice Manager who explained to us some of the challenges they have to meet and how they manage the 3000 appointments that we as patients make every week.

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Four members of the committee have also met, at his request, Tom Hickman the owner of West Hall Estates, to talk about the possible proposed use of his green belt land for housing. We will meet again next year.

Our next challenge was to start the process of finding out how you, the residents, felt about West Byfleet.

So In April we distributed the first of our questionnaires to the 2, 500 homes in our neighbourhood, we asked just three very general questions; what do you like, what do you dislike and how could we improve West Byfleet?

On a rather wet evening of the 1st of May we held a Drop In session at the Library. The aim of this exercise was for residents to meet the committee and talk about the village and they could return the questionnaires. Overall we received about 100 replies and 60 people attended the Drop In.

Full analysis of that questionnaire, was compiled by Lisa Graae, and can be found on our webpage.

Overwhelmingly people like WB some of the comments were that they felt it still has a village feel, is friendly, convenient to motorways and airports but also close to open countryside. Dislikes; well that large building namely Sheer House, the traffic congestion, lack of parking provision.

A bench was asked for between the shops and Woodlands Ave., This request we forward onto our Councillor Richard Wilson and one was found and installed a few months ago in the wooded area the other side of the station.

Our next challenge was money!

The villages of Byfleet, Pyrford and West Byfleet were each allotted up to £1500 by the Residents' Association to set up a forum.

In August we applied to the Government agency, Locality who have been given the job of supporting the local Forums, we asked for a grant of £1560 pounds which is part of total grants of £7000 which each Forum is allowed to claim.

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The reason we claimed for a small amount was because the money has to be spent by 31st December this year. The bulk of the rest of the grant money we can claim for next year will be used, in due course, to employ a consultant to turn our plan into legal language.

Moving onto our next challenge which was to start to form our Planning Groups.

We looked at what other Forums had done and also looked at the advice from Locality and decided to try and set up five planning groups which would cover many aspects of our village life. To start this process we called two public members meeting in September and October of this year.

The Built Environment Group would look at building type, density, street scene, and conservation etc.

Open Space Group would determine the major features of WB open spaces and review the history and present circumstance affecting each space.

These two groups have been set up each with 5 members, Wade Pollard is leading the Built Environment Group.

The Open Spaces Group is led by Ross Goodman and a first rough draft of the Open Spaces section of the draft neighbourhood plan is in hand.

Both groups put questions forward to go into our Shaping the Future of West Byfleet Questionnaire.

David Hastie has just offered to head up the Local Infrastructure Group which would look at such areas as traffic volume, pavements, roads, bike provision etc.

David is very keen for people to join him, so if any of you here tonight are interested in this area, please do see David at the end of this meeting.

The Commercial Sector Planning Group is led by the West Byfleet Business Association and will cover all economic activities in our village. They have put together a Business Questionnaire that will be distributed to the commercial sector during the coming weeks.

West Byfleet been as it were piggy in the middle our groups are also in contact with their counterparts in Byfleet and Pyrford Forums.

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The only group we have not been able to find a leader for and therefore has not been to set up is the Social and Community Group, this group would look at present provisions for our senior citizens, our youth facilities, local sport, children play areas, also look to what the community needs in the way of facilities. Here we may look at perhaps having our own village/ community hall.

Again if anyone or perhaps two of you are interested in heading up this important group do please contact me or Pauline.

To progress the planning groups they needed to know your views so our **next challenge** was to put together a Questionnaire

Many people have contributed to this document, as well as the planning groups we have input from the Res Ass and the Business Association as well as the committee

We have been very indebted to Emma Davis who pulled all our many thoughts and ideas together to produce the document and also to Emma Slaymaker, a Surrey Analyst who help shape our questions and loaded the document onto a survey engine.

If you have not already done so, do please complete our questionnaire; we would be very grateful if you could do it on line if you have a computer and remember anyone who has a vote can complete the questionnaire but before the 6th of December.

The results may then be viewed at our next open morning at the Catholic Church Hall on the 7th Feb., next year between 10 – 12 and on our webpage.

So what to the future and our next set of challenges?

Our next committee meeting will be on the 11th December when we will plan for the coming year.

We will start to look at your answers to the questionnaire and decide the best way forward. Please remember our Neighbourhood Forum Plan is yours plan, it is not the committee's plan.

We are sure more questions will be needed to be asked. More views collected but we would like to aim to get a draft Neighbourhood Plan together by late he Spring 2015.

We feel in many ways there are a lots of unknowns as far as West Byfleet is concerned. On the 20th January we should see the Boundary Commission report; there is the WBC Green Belt Review also due out in January.

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There is the ever present problem with Sheer House, which is now empty and at Broadoaks a grade two listed building and 40 acres of land which no one seems to want or know what to do with.

So if you have not become a member of the Forum please do think about joining the other 220 members.

There really is no catch it's free and Rob our membership secretary will keep you updated about local issues when they occur.

If anyone would like to join our committee also do let us know, we would be delighted to see you.

Finally we would like to say a few thank yous.

First to Ian Yates our secretary who had to leave us as his job has taken him away from the area. We are urgently looking for a minute secretary or again two people might like to share the position. Do come and talk to us if you would like to become part of the team. Thank you Pauline for taking over.

Thank you to Waitrose for the use of their meeting room and to Chris and John Morrison who for over a year now have acted as our forum village post box at Apples and Pears. To the wonderful and enthusiastic bunch of people who have taken on the job of delivering the leaflets and questionnaires around the village, we know a challenge at times with some of the gated communities.

At last but by no means least Pauline and I would like to give a big thank you to our committee for their support and input, most of whom have been with us from the beginning.

And finally to you all for coming along on this cold wet night and showing your support. Thank you very much.

Penny Hoskyn

Pauline Hedges.

Joint Chair West Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum

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