

Annual Parish Meeting - Weston on the Green Village

Good Evening,

The Parish Council of Weston on the Green works on behalf of the village. We endeavour to respond to community needs and we learn about these through contact with the residents on an informal basis and in some cases through our village survey.

We were joined earlier in the year by Michael Aldrige who is leading the Traffic Advisory Group and is on the technology team. Recently we have been joined by David Williams who is leading our Biodiversity/Sustainability work and i/c of the maintenance of the spinney. We continue to be supported by John Miller, who leads the Works team and Tracy Rowan, Finance. I have been Chair of the parish council, and have a leadership role in the Neighbourhood Plan, outreach, maintaining and developing strong relationships outside of the village, serve on the Finance Committee and am about to take up the role of Planning. Each councillor is strong in their leadership areas and also adds to the cohesive team that is the Parish Council.

With both sadness and gratefulness, we have accepted the resignation/retirement of Susan Davis from the Parish Council. Susan has set a high bar for research, reporting and collaboration in her planning portfolio, finance team, staffing lead and Neighbourhood Plan colleague. We wish Susan well as she takes on new ventures (but still supports the NP work).

Initiatives completed, continued and started in the year 2025-26

One popular initiative has been the Community Van which has recently been replaced. (March 2026). A report mid 2025 stated over 3000 miles in the year, 50 trips travelled and to approximately 20 different destinations with 30 residents benefiting from this community asset. There is a fantastic team of drivers led by Graham Barnett and composed of James Henderson, Nigel Allinson, and Greg Milne.

The urban looking path under and around the oak tree at the top of North Lane was removed. This was a five-year struggle by the parish council and our then OCC councillor, Nigel Simpson to get the path removed at district/county expense, with no further harm to the tree. The five-day project had clear directives from the Cherwell District Council's tree specialist with oversight from our own consultant. In total 35 tonnes of concrete were removed. Special thanks to Roger Evans for his ongoing work over many years in trying to protect the oak tree. With the bench restored and some grass planted on the mound, many driving by would never know the drama and concern caused by the reckless building of the removed path. Thanks also to Roger for the design of rural path behind the tree.

Traffic speed on the B430 has been a concern for years. A great achievement of the past year has been the agreement by OCC Highways to lower the 40mph speed to 30mph. This will be signposted as soon as the road is resurfaced and marked later in April/May 2026. A huge word of thanks must go to the Speedwatch team who sit out in bright sun

and miserable rain taking count of passing cars and reporting on the speeding vehicles. Thanks to Graham Barnett, John Roper, Bob Hessian and Patsy Parsons. It is their data that has helped with the lowering of the speed limit. The challenge will be having the cooperation of all drivers.

Over the course of the year there have been discussions about providing bus shelters in the village. The B430 can be busy, and villagers do mention that they feel vulnerable standing so close to the edge. The challenge has been that the road is beside the Conservation Area and thus must meet standards appropriate to the zone. The Parish Council have set some guidelines: passengers must be able to see through the sides, there are seats and the shelters are not intrusive plus meet Conservation Area standards. There are costs and we are currently looking for some funding. It will be a challenge, but we would like the shelters in place before the biting days of winter.

Over the course of the year, the parish council has explored digital mapping software, a new website host with a gov.uk email communication service. There are new national guidelines which we will adhere to and a set of security features that will further protect our council's communications. The mapping software is now on board and some of our members are following tutorials and hoping to be able to use the software efficiently in the coming year.

Biodiversity and sustainability have been a core value represented by several policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Once the parish council had voted unanimously to join CDC and OCC to declare a Climate Emergency, we felt obliged to build in some actions. One of the early areas of focus was maintaining the School Field as a wildlife meadow, safe from development and a haven for insects, butterflies and small creatures safe from traffic and chemical insecticides. We also have understood the importance of biodiversity corridors where all manner of birds and flying creatures can stop off for rest and food and then move on. We have a connection with nearby villages as the corridor does not follow roads but swoops as far as Otmoor. We are concerned that Gallos Brook flows freely, maintaining a healthy chalk stream balance and providing a safe, drinking spot for all manner of animal life.

A great step forward has occurred with several villagers buying plots in the school field and creating restrictive covenants in their title deeds which prevents development on the added strips for the protection of conservation and neighbouring land. Although the fencing was not envisaged by the School Field group, the benefit is the management of the sheep that do us the favour of grazing and keeping the mowing costs low! Graham Barnett, our Footpath Warden is in communication with OCC about managing the central path, so it isn't a muddy creek throughout the winter rains. One important point, we ask all dog owners to keep dogs on the leash and pick up poo, which unlike horse manure does not foster wildflower growth.

Two initiatives are maturing in regard to Biodiversity. David Williams has managed to have hundreds of trees and bushes donated to the village. Some of these have been given to villagers for their gardens, others have been planted in the spinney and at the end of the playing field alongside the donated Sycamore Gap sapling. A memorial group

of trees will be in a cluster closer to the spinney. Some of the trees are maturing and will be ready for planting this year or next.

David is also a swift nest expert, recently in the local newspaper visiting a school in Bicester. He has a great knowledge of the birds living in or stopping over in the village. This work will be helpful in our future responses to planning applications.

The greatest challenge of the past year has been keeping up to date with reforms and understanding how they affect our village and larger parish. We have approximately 650 residents and a wonderfully, green array of surrounding fields. How do we protect both and plan for the future? It is a fearful and challenging time.

Flood Management has also become part of the Works agenda over the past year. Gallos Brook has been slow running due to subsidence and blockages. A great deal of work has already been done with the cooperation of landowners, and we are grateful for this support. Thanks to John Miller and his equipment for this work.

Future concerns will be clean flowing water, streams that can cope with field run off and the impact of recent housing on fields to the north of the village. Clear drains are important and all these aspects of water flow will keep flood risk to a minimum in the village.

The Neighbourhood Plan is under the auspices of the Parish Council but is also a stand-alone planning document. Susan and I will focus on our challenges and recommended actions in the Key Presentation this evening.

We would like to have three more parish councillors to spread the work out more evenly. Please have a word with the Clerk or any of the Councillors for further information.

Needed: (1) a candidate with a keen interest in the development of the playground and possible programmes for children throughout the year. (2) a candidate with an interest in outreach who will work with other groups in the village to integrate new people into the community (3) a candidate interested in social media and communication

We would like to give special thanks to our parish clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, Jane Mullane. She is extremely efficient and supportive of all the work. Thank you Jane.

Challenges

You will have understood the challenges we have faced. You will have appreciated the hard work done on your behalf.

What has really helped is the readiness of many people to support various aspects of our work.

If you have moved into the village either through the Covid era or since then, there is a good chance that it has taken some time to learn more about the village. We would very

much encourage you to consider this 'Doing Just One Thing' for the community!! See the poster at the back of the room for ideas and sign up!!

Thank you

Diane Bohm

Chair

Weston on the Green Parish Council

‘Do just one thing’

- **plant bulbs, flowers that are bee and butterfly friendly**
- **encourage your children to have a bee friendly garden or pot**
- **pick up litter on your street**
- **report problems as soon as they occur**
- **foster a flower planter at the entrance nearest you to the village**
- **be a volunteer driver**
- **deliver the Village News**
- **foster a bench near you, clean it and repaint or stain as needed**
- **help paint the playground fence**
- **help put up bird boxes**
- **set up a Neighbourhood watch programme**