

Annual Parish Assembly

**Parishioners of Wotton-under-Edge are invited to
the Civic Centre, Wotton-under-Edge
Monday 23rd April 2018, at 7pm**

Cllr Paul Smith

Mayor of Wotton-under-Edge Town Council
16th April 2018

Agenda

- 1) Welcome, Introductions & receive absence apologies from Councillors
- 2) Adoption of Previous Minutes of Annual Parish Assembly of May 2017 & any Matters Arising from those Minutes
- 3) Brief Report from the Mayor Cllr Paul Smith
- 4) Brief reports from Town Council Committee Chairs
 - Planning (Cllr C Young)
 - Footpaths (Cllr R Claydon)
 - Allotments (Cllr P Barton)
 - Regeneration (Cllr A Wilkinson)

Receive brief updates from Council supported organisations

- Wotton Youth Partnership
 - Wotton Library
 - Wotton in Bloom
 - Wotton Swimming Pool
 - Wotton Community Sports Foundation
 - Synwell Playing Fields Committee
 - Wotton Heritage Centre
 - Wotton Recreational Trust
- 5) Brief report from Cllr Dr JE Cordwell on County Council matters
 - 6) Brief report from a District Councillor on District Council matters
 - 7) Any brief questions or comments from the Public on Town Affairs

WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE TOWN COUNCIL



DRAFT MINUTES OF WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE TOWN COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY



Held on Friday 12th May, at 7pm in the Civic Centre

Present: Cllrs P Smith (Mayor), T Luker (Deputy Mayor), R Claydon, John Cordwell, June Cordwell, N Clement, A Wilkinson, P Barton, L Farmer, C Young, A Proctor

In attendance: Town Clerk Ms S Bailey & council staff Members of the Public 18

- 1) Welcome, introductions & receive apologies Apologies for absence received from Cllrs N Pinnegar, A Kendall.
- 2) **Adoption of previous Minutes** of Annual Parish Assembly of 22nd March 2016 & any Matters Arising from those Minutes. It was proposed by L Farmer and seconded by P Barton to approve the Minutes as presented, all in favour.

3) **Guest speaker Mr A Harris Head Teacher of Katherine Lady Berkeley School (KLB)**

Mr Harris was welcomed and spoke to the meeting about funding cuts in the education sector as well as likely changes due to the expansion of grammar schools and the introduction of Multi-Academy Trusts. He outlined the possible effects of these issues on KLB School over the next few years. Mr Harris explained that although the Government had given reassurances about funding being protected, this was not the case. He outlined the current funding situation at KLB and the challenges presented by recent increases in expenditure and reductions in income. He advised that the financial situation at the school was currently secure due to a number of economies that had been made, but that various challenges had to be met over the next few years if this position was to be maintained.

Mr Harris went on to affirm KLB's commitment to remaining as a comprehensive school and detailed the advantages of this system, including the opportunities for all pupils provided by large comprehensives and the success of local comprehensives in Gloucestershire's list of top ten schools. However, he outlined the various threats presented by plans for the expansion of the grammar school system, including the possibility of comprehensives converting to grammar schools, Multi-Academy Trusts converting one school to a grammar, or free schools setting up as grammar schools. Mr Harris explained some of the disadvantages of Multi-Academy Trusts and informed the meeting that KLB intends to remain as a Single Academy Trust. However, due to the different model in operation for primary schools, this could be reviewed if local primary schools were threatened, in order to ensure a holistic approach that protects the interests of all local children. He concluded by inviting comments and discussion on the topic to himself via email at KLB.

The Mayor thanked Mr Harris for his attendance and explanations.

4) **Brief Report from the Mayor:** Cllr Paul Smith.

The Mayor conveyed thanks to the Town Clerk and staff for their hard work during what has been a very busy year. He noted changes in Town Council membership during the year, thanking various committee chairs and members of committees and working groups for their contributions. He outlined the Council's continued financial support for the swimming pool and the youth centre. The Council had built on last year's NALC Foundation Level Award by gaining a Silver/Quality Award and may attempt the Quality Gold Award. The Council completed the new Community Plan with the input of a working group from the Regeneration Committee, and this is available on the Council's website. The Heritage Centre has gained additional support from the Town Council with an extended lease under negotiation. The integral Visitor Centre is working alongside that of the One Stop Shop. The Mayor expressed his hope that residents and visitors are enjoying the new landscaped area outside the Rope Walk toilets and thanked the Town Clerk for delivering a successful project. Stroud District Council (SDC) is being pressed to carry out improvements to the toilets. The Mayor noted the success of the first Wotton Walking Festival along with the Arts Festival and Garden Trail. A second Walking Festival is planned for next year. The Arts Centre has secured an extended new lease for the Chipping Hall which will allow them to apply for various grants.

5) Reports from Town Council Committee Chairs:

- **Planning:** Cllr Terry Luker reported that the Potters Pond development had finally been completed. A housing association had expressed interest in developing the Fountain Crescent site for affordable housing. He noted the very strong views of the community in relation to the two major developments at Holywell Farm and the land behind the Fire Station and reported that the second of the two applications had been withdrawn to allow further consideration by the applicant. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) had replaced S106 from 1st April 2017. A higher level of CIL is payable if the town has a Neighbourhood Development Plan but this would cost approximately £50,000 to implement. The Town Council was consulted by SDC on 98 planning applications, slightly fewer than the previous year.
- **Footpaths:** Cllr Roger Claydon reported on changes in Footpath Committee membership during the year and invited interested parties to join. The Committee has been working on a review of the parish's public rights of way and has also started on a survey of the town's footways and pavements. He invited members of the public to submit reports if they have any concerns about footpaths and footways. With financial support from the Town Council, it is planned for the Cotswold Wardens to repair the old mill wall and install a stone seating circle at the Holywell Leaze site, which is overseen by the Committee. The Committee has also been involved in the planning of the Wotton Walking Festival, which has received financial support from both the Town Council and the Chamber of Trade in order to get the initiative underway.
- **Allotments:** Cllr Paul Barton reported on the current situation in respect of the number of allotments on the two sites and plots available. Work has been completed to shore up the paths at New Road and Cllr Barton thanked Mr Howse for keeping the overall cost low and Mr Jones for supplying the wood. The gradient at the main entrance of New Road has been surveyed but work is on hold due to costs and other issues. A new noticeboard has been installed at New Road and the reduced water pressure at the site is currently under investigation.

At Knapp Road, it has been decided to leave the existing bramble patches, in order to encourage wildlife. A new inspection system has been introduced with the aim of improving plot maintenance and Cllr Barton invited tenants to approach him with any issues or suggestions for improvements. He also outlined the benefits of forming committees for both the sites and invited interested parties to contact the Town Council. Cllr Barton apologised for the delay in implementing some projects due to staff sickness.

- **Regeneration Partnership:** Committee chairman Cllr Alistair Kendall was not present at the meeting – the report in the booklet outlines the activity of the Town Regeneration Partnership during the year.

6) Receive brief updates from **Council supported organisations**.

- **Wotton Youth Partnership:** No attendee, report as presented in the booklet.
- **Wotton Library:** No attendee, report as presented in the booklet.
- **Wotton in Bloom:** Sue Hunt reported on the success of Wotton in Bloom in 2016 which was widely considered to be the best ever year. She provided the meeting with an outline of how the group is organised, funded and achieves its aims. Sue highlighted the benefits of Wotton in Bloom to the town, how it is a great model of community cohesion and what it means to live in Wotton. People are coming to Wotton from other towns and looking to replicate the scheme in their own area. She encouraged people to support the initiative through the Tesco tokens being collected in stores during May and June as part of the Bags of Help Programme.
- **Wotton Swimming Pool:** No attendee, report as presented in the booklet.
- **Wotton Community Sports Foundation:** Sarah Watt presented the WCSF report highlighting the key points. The safe access path was successfully completed and opened in November 2016 and the group anticipates an extra 8,000 visits to the site due to use of the path for a range of activities. Thanks were given to the groups and individuals who made donations to support the path, in particular the Barnwood Trust and Wotton Town Council. The new Saturday parkrun event had also increased site usage. The Astro and 3G pitches are now in their fourth season and continue to be well used with Wotton becoming a centre of excellence for hockey. The WCSF estimates that the PARC now achieves around 120,000 visits a year. The group has now planted over 5,000 saplings on the site, built a covered seating area by the skatepark and helped the rugby club to power their flood lighting. Future plans include a BMX dirt track, memory walk, increased seating, a play area as well as a full size artificial pitch and changing rooms. WCSF has worked closely with KLB School to create a hub of sport and activity. The group welcomes anyone who has ideas for the future development of the PARC. The Secret Gardens Trail in May will raise further funding for the PARC and 'Party in the PARC' is being held on June 17th, with a wide programme of events for all.
- **Synwell Playing Fields Committee:** Mr James Thompson, Chair of the Synwell Playing Fields Committee, presented a report on what the organisation had achieved during 2016/7, their 85th year. A new committee was formed which has attracted a number of new younger members, ensuring that the playing field remains as a well-used community asset for the foreseeable future. The Committee has successfully raised funding from a number of sources which has been used for various new pieces of play equipment. Mr Thompson thanked the organisations which had supported the playing field. He also thanked Wotton Town Council, in particular the Town Clerk, for helping the new Committee to get established and apply for funding. Events held during the year were noted and the Committee is continuing to explore ways of opening up the field to other users. Wotton Rovers continues to use the field and remedial work has taken place to the pitch as well as updating the changing rooms. The pitch and other facilities were rated as Good by the GPFA in September 2016 and are now rated Excellent following a further £17k spent this year. Consideration is being given to providing outdoor fitness equipment and a shelter for the 14-17s age group. The Committee is negotiating a new 20-year lease with the Pavilion Sports and Social Club. The Committee plans to celebrate the 85th year with an event in September along the lines of the old Synwell Show and Carnival. Cllr Paul Smith wished the Committee well with the lease negotiations and Sarah Watt offered her congratulations on how well the new Committee has managed.
- **Wotton Heritage Centre:** Haidee Jackson highlighted the key points from the report, informing the meeting that the Heritage Centre Management Team had implemented the agreement made with the Town Council in 2015/6 to develop the Centre, including opening in the afternoons and weekends to support the work of the One Stop Shop. Other developments include conservation projects, developing the front of the building as a Visitor Information Centre, new signage, new storage boxes and materials, and improved display cabinets. The year had been very successful with three exhibitions taking place. Electronic storage of data has improved due to training of a dedicated committee member, with plans in place to make this available online and share information with other centres. Work has taken place to recover thousands of photographic negatives from the Gazette archives. A new project is underway with the Wotton Youth Partnership to record on film people in their later years. Good relationships have been built with the One Stop Shop, the Cotswold Group of Tourist Information Managers and the new Tourism Network set up to cover the Cotswold Severn Vale, including meetings attended to raise Wotton's profile on the tourist trail. All this work has resulted in increased footfall at the Centre and raised its profile in the town.

7) **County Council:** County Cllr Dr J Cordwell outlined various initiatives and activities from a county perspective over the past year. The Highways Department budget had increased by £4M as well as funding increases for children's, young people's and adult's services. The Council Tax Precept increase was approved at 1.99%, plus 2% adult social care levy. The County Council's share of Band D Council Tax increases by £45.25 to £1,179.26. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had withdrawn from the Road Safety Partnership because of reduced funding and consideration is being given to PCCs taking over local Fire and Rescue Services. The PCC had decided not to replace the retiring Chief Constable although a new appointment has now been made. Consultation was undertaken on the introduction of a national funding formula for mainstream schools, resulting in considerable opposition. The proposals would have a significant impact on funding for local schools with smaller primary schools being favoured. Amey's Highways contract ends in April 2019 and the Council will decide in June/July whether to retender or extend the contract. Issues relating to low satisfaction levels with the current contract had been raised. The Children's Activity Fund continues this year at £5K and is now open for bids. The County Council had dealt with a range of issues over the year, including slow issue of death certificates, poor waste recycling rates, the state of the roads, bus services, A&E waiting times, ambulance response times, NHS and care services funding and students' mental health problems. Conversion of street lights to LEDs has largely been completed in Wotton. A new bus no.60 is running from Thornbury to Gloucester and Mike's Travel continues to provide a service despite withdrawal of funding. Public is advised that local issues such as drains and streetlights can be reported via the GCC website.

8) **District Council:** District Cllr Ken Tucker was not present at the meeting. Report as presented in the booklet.

9) **Questions or comments from the Public on Town Affairs**

Mr M Tucker asked why some of the reports in the booklet had not been presented to the meeting. Cllr P Smith explained that those organisations were not supported financially by the Town Council and were under no obligation to attend. Mr Tucker drew attention to the Chamber of Trade report and questioned the decision of the Town Council not to support the recent new car park opportunity. The Mayor replied that council has to listen to the views of both sides and take a view. Since the majority of councillors had objected to the application, that became the final town council decision.

Mr M Lovell commented that there had been no election of Councillors for many years and questioned the democratic mandate of the Council. The response was that every four years there is a parish election opportunity and all who wish to stand as a town councillor are encouraged to do so.

Mr D Harrison of the Swan Hotel commented that following the Council's earlier 'in principle' support of the car park development, he had invested a six-figure sum and expressed displeasure at the later decision made by the Council to object to the development. He asked what the Council is now doing about parking in the town. The Mayor replied that SDC would make the final decision on any application and pointed out that the application had now been withdrawn as the developer is working on further information.

Mr J Thompson commented that in his view there was a risk of selling the town for cash incentives, which could result in the character of the town being destroyed in the short term for very little benefit. Mr Thompson thanked Councillors for giving up their time for the benefit of the town.

Mr W Thomas drew the meeting's attention to the customer survey conducted by the Chamber of Trade about the car park development proposal. 93% of the 1,277 people surveyed had shown support for the car park proposal, which indicated that the town wasn't 'split down the middle' as some had suggested. Mr Thomas commented that in his view, businesses were losing money because people couldn't park and the town was in decline as a result. The Mayor thanked Mr Thomas for his views, and indeed all other contributions on this emotive subject. The matter was now in the hands of the Planning Authority –SDC.

The Assembly concluded at this point and Parishioners were invited to share refreshments with Councillors and staff

MAYOR'S REPORT



As your Mayor and Chairman of Wotton Town Council (WTC) I would like to welcome you all to the 2018 Annual Parish Assembly and hope you will all take the opportunity to take part in the meeting tonight.

To commence, I would like to thank the Clerk and her staff, who have worked particularly hard during this year as we have had staff shortages due to long term sickness. Also for the Clerk's advice for keeping us all on the straight and narrow in accordance with statutory and other requirements. We also just after Christmas appointed a new caretaker and I would therefore like to welcome Wayne Smith to the staff team.

Next I would like to thank our Councillors who freely give their time to attend sometimes lengthy meetings and for their time given to various projects that have been carried out over the year. In the last year we have bid farewell to three Councillors; Andra Proctor, Alastair Kendall and Noman Clement and welcome their replacements, Cllrs Jonathan Turner, Richard Hale and Mike Short. I would like to thank the three ex councillors for their time and work whilst Members of the Town Council.

Thirdly, I would like to thank the Chairs of Committees and their Committee members, together with working groups, which in many cases are made up of not just Councillors but also co-opted residents, who not only attend meetings, but also do a great deal of work outside of the committees.

During the year, the Town Council has managed to get Stroud District Council to invest some funding into their public toilets in Rope Work. The work that has now been completed by them, includes re-tiling of the front section of the roof as well as refurbishment to the inside. We are also looking at the costs by getting quotes for the refurbishments of the Old Town toilets including its roof.

Money has also been invested in the New Road allotments with an improved entrance to the site as well as a new water supply. Some improvements to the Knapp Road site have been carried out with more to come.

The Fleur de lys on the roof of the Chipping Hall has been replaced as the existing damaged one was in danger of falling off the roof. Work also continues with improvements to the cemetery including reshaping and cutting back hedging, tree maintenance, and bench repairs and installing extra remembrance plots.

The Wotton swimming pool, which the Town Council continues to provide significant financial supports, has been offered a grant of £45k from Sport England for replacing the tiles to the pool and for refurbishment to the changing rooms and office. To allow the grant to be paid the lease and Service Level Agreement with the Wotton Swimming Pool Ltd are being modified to meet the requirements of Sport England.

The Youth Work carried out at the Youth Centre in the Chipping is run via a contract between the Town Council and two youth work providers. This contract is due to end in the summer of this year. A small working party of fellow Councillors have over the last few months been drawing up the Tender Documents to allow the Town Council to let a new Contract for the next three years to allow the youth work to continue. The contract is at present waiting for tenders to be returned with the contract due to be let by the middle of June.

I am pleased to say that the Town Council have given the Wotton in Bloom Group additional funding to help the group as they, for the first time, apply for Britain in Bloom. This hopefully will bring more people into the town.

The Annual Parish Assembly is important as a means of exchanging views with residents. Committee Chairmen will report at the Assembly and there will be an opportunity for all to meet with Councillors on a less formal basis at the end of the meeting. We hope that this will provide for a rewarding interchange of views and ideas. We will do our best to answer questions that arise but please be understanding if we are not able to respond directly on the night.

Cllr Paul Smith, TOWN MAYOR AND CHAIRMAN

Planning Committee Report April 2018

I have taken into account all applications from February 17 until February 18 that were listed for planning meetings. There were 118 Applications of all sizes, approximately 50% were supported by WTC, 93% were given permission by SDC.

During the year an application at Holywell was not supported by WTC and also by SDC, this was taken to an appeal but again it was rejected.

An application for development to the land behind the fire station(this as reported last year was withdrawn), A second application for the same address has been put in by the developer, this too has not been supported by WTC and is now waiting for SDC to make a decision.

Dryleaze court is now up for sale. This should result in developer interest.

Fountain crescent has now been permitted. The full moon development seems to have stopped.

A draft text of the National Planning Policy Framework is out for local consultation and is open until May.

Chris Young, Chairman of Planning Committee

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AND AMENITY AREAS COMMITTEE

This year the Committee welcomed four new co-opted members of the public, Jane Mason, Dale Curtis, Patrick Comer and Marcus Cross and said farewell to Karen Bailey and Pauline McGuinness who we thank for their good efforts. We have also welcomed staff member, Jenny Wyatt, who has taken over secretarial duties from Yasmin Milsom. Yasmin is thanked for her support to the committee over many years.

The periodic review of the Parish's public rights of way which started in 2016 has been completed and members of the Committee are now following up those paths identified as having significant problems. Any residual issues, such as unstable stiles or blocked access, will be reported to the County Council.

Committee members have also continued their survey of footways in and around the town, now that the disturbance caused by Virgin Media during the latter part of 2017 has finished. The survey is essentially complete and the results are now being analysed.

In August 2018, Wotton was one of a number of Cotswold towns and villages selected by the Cotswold Conservation Board to be part of their "Cotswold Gateway Project" bid of £90,000 from the Rural Development (RDPE) Growth Fund. If successful, a number of circular walking and cycling routes around the town will be given special "gateway" route markers and several notice boards showing the routes will be erected. The Council received a significant amount of help for this project from the local walking and cycling fraternity and this was much appreciated.

The Committee also maintains oversight of the town's Holywell Leaze amenity area. It is hoped that the Cotswold Wardens, with financial support from the Town Council, will shortly be undertaking repairs to the old mill wall and also installing a stone circle seating area.

The second Wotton Walking Festival, organised by volunteer members of the community, will take place during 11th-13th May 2018. The Town Council representative on the Walking Festival organising committee is Cllr Nicholas Pinnegar. The 2018/2019 budget for the PROW and Amenity Areas Committee is £500

Cllr R Claydon



Chairman's Report for the Allotments for the Annual Assembly 2018.

At the present time three half plots are vacant at Knapp Road allotments with four full and one half plot at New Road.

From now on new tenants will pay a holding deposit of £50.00 on the commencement of tenancy and photographs will be taken to ascertain the condition of the plot.

When the tenant leaves a plot inspection will take place with more photographs taken and if the plot is in satisfactory condition the fifty pounds will be returned however, if the plot is not left in a reasonable condition the money will be used towards tidying up the plot.

The first issue of new quarterly publication sent to each tenant giving information on vacant plots, ongoing allotment projects, tips on when to sow and plant with other relevant information. This first issue was well received with Diana receiving compliments from tenants.

The Memory Group was offered plot 15 by main entrance and after taking a look they agreed to take the plot.

A skip was placed inside the main gate at Knapp Road allotment and the area inside the main gate was cleared of rubbish including fly tipping and some rubbish also transported from New Road allotments to the skip including the venerable landmark, the ancient rotivator. Full credit on that to Mark and Wayne for not getting double hernias on carrying that deed out!

New Road allotments have had the following tasks done in the last year to a cost of around £8000.

- A greatly improved new entrance at the main gate making much easier access.
- New water supply resulting in a decent water pressure for the whole allotment.
- A new notice board.
- Paths shored up.
- Plot 42 trimmed and covered with weed proof membrane.

At Knapp Road as mentioned a skip placed inside the main gate resulting in a much tidier area.

A large area of mature brambles that formed a hedge near plot 23 trimmed and when shoots appear they will be treated to kill the roots off.

Plots 22A and 21B have been trimmed and also covered with a weed proof membrane.

A saving of around £700.00 made at Knapp Road by using Town Council resources for trimming .

Many thanks to Diana Hyam for her guidance and all her expert management of allotment affairs.

Cllr Paul Barton



In November at the Wotton Youth Partnership AGM I was voted in as Chairman. In 2001, I formed the Group, which was then known as the Youth Liaison Group, set up because of violence in the town. Today we are told by the Police and Neighbourhood Wardens that antisocial behaviour is low. It is certainly quieter in the Chipping than it has been, and I attribute this to the Youth Workers who do an admirable job.

We promote and support a wide range of activities:

- The Heritage Project is under way. KLB students are recording on camera views of older people, of how they grew up in Wotton, or why they came to live here. A grant from Stroud District Council is paying for the Project.
- We gave £1,200 for a residential training course for young youth leaders.
- We have also helped to fund youth work sessions on a Friday.
- We gave £1,200 towards the Wotton Community Sports Foundation's shelter, and latterly £700 towards the 2 BMX tracks, which they hope to start in April.
- Summer Activities at the Sports Centre have been partly funded by GCC's "Children's Activity Fund". Sadly, this fund and SDC's grant system will no longer exist.
- The last grant to be obtained from SDC was £5,933 for Mental Health and Wellbeing. £1,000 was added from the Recreational Trust, plus matched funding by us. Youth workers started this as a pilot scheme way back and then obtained the grant. They are now creating a one-to-one space in the Youth Centre.
- The much-needed Youth Centre signage is now in the flowerbed outside. We gave £250 to the Town Council towards its erection.
- As a start-up for the Bearlands Play Area we gave £500, then to make sure they had all the equipment needed, we gave a donation of £754 for a balance beam.
- A graffiti workshop (paint on canvas) was held at Under the Edge Arts and we donated £250 towards this enjoyable activity.
- Currently we are committing £400 to buying football shirts for Wotton Rovers Juniors.

The Town Council provide the Youth Centre building and contract out the youth work. Our contribution is to promote and support a wide range of activities for young people in the Town.

June Cordwell, Chairman

Wotton Library

Baby Bounce and Rhyme continues to go from strength to strength with a regular 15-18 babies attending with their parents, grandparents and carers

We had 101 children complete the Summer Reading Challenge in 2018 which ran with the theme of Animal Agents – one of our most successful craft events which took place in conjunction with this was 'Spy School'. Over 20 children came along to try their hand at writing with invisible ink, taking fingerprints and diffusing fake bombs.

We run a regular monthly Library Club, a friendly informal meet up with tea and biscuits – a free minibus is available to pick up those customers who might not otherwise be able to get into the library and there are spaces for new members.

We are looking forward to welcoming a new member of staff in April who has a wealth of experience working in libraries in South Gloucestershire.

There was a Library Walk which took place in January starting at Wotton Library and finishing at Dursley Library, an opportunity to see some of the beautiful countryside surrounding our library as well as to share thoughts on your favourite books. There will be another walk on 12th May to be included in the Wotton Walking Festival.

As always a big thanks to the volunteers. WE are always looking to recruit new volunteers so please get in touch if you would like to get involved with your local library.



Anne Riley, Gloucestershire Libraries

WOTTON IN BLOOM 2017/18

2017 was a bumper year for Wotton in Bloom. We put out a record number of plant containers – 149 including the hanging troughs and 2 giant tubs. Our aim is for everything that we do to be financially sustainable:



- The hanging baskets already are as each one has to be wholly or partly funded before it's put up.
- The flowers for the 7 hanging troughs in Old Town have been paid for from a grant from Wotton's Secret Gardens Trail.
- The giant tub at Old Town is sponsored by Wotton Lions, who do a lot to support us. The tub outside the NFU office has been sponsored by Wotton Roundtable for the next 4 years.

We are enormously grateful for the support that we get from the Town. Our major donors in 2017 were: Wotton Town Council, Renishaw, Tesco Bags of Life fund and Wotton's Secret Gardens Trail

The majority of our income is still from the traders and businesses, clubs and societies, and local residents. We are all really proud of our Town and believe that Wotton in Bloom makes a big difference not only to the aesthetic, but to the social cohesion of the Town with local people really feeling ownership and taking such pleasure in the flowers.

In 2018 we have entered Heart of England in Bloom which is the regional heat of the national Britain in Bloom competition. This is very exciting and a lot of work! Our judging will be in the morning of Thursday 5th July, so that gives us a date to work towards.

Fundraising started early this year as we will be so busy, this is going really well which gives me one less thing to worry about. We are selling the hanging baskets and troughs as normal but hoping to do more. To aid this the Wotton Directory printed an excellent article about our plans, and we made a leaflet from it which was put through every door on the main streets. The response has been fantastic with new customers for flowers and offers of help. We have also been given a one off grant of £630 from Wotton Town Council which will be match funded and used to pay for flowers to fill in some of the more noticeable gaps in the Town.

We aim to put the flowers up before the end of May to support the Secret Garden's Trail. We also see a desperate need to clean & tidy the Town, and see Britain in Bloom as an ideal opportunity to do that. We are talking to traders about tidying up shop windows, landlords about the fronts of buildings and residents about how they can help. The Town Clerk has offered help from the caretaker in the run up to judging and we are planning 2 'Big Clean Up' days, the first in mid May and the second in early July.

If anyone would like to help put baskets up, sweep streets, tidy up or anything else please get in touch with me suehunt2@btinternet.com 01453 521263. We think that this is really positive thing for the Town as a whole, and are greatly heartened by the groundswell of support that we are seeing.

Sue Hunt, Wotton in Bloom 2018



I am very pleased to report that we have enjoyed a successful season, and again I am grateful for the support I have seen coming to the pool from dozens of kindly and generous people giving their time, money, effort and skills to help with the running and the development of the facility. We have also enjoyed the benefit of a core of dedicated and professional employees providing the operational support needed to run the pool day-to-day. This year we have added a new Trustee to the board by co-option in anticipation of some planned retirements.

This season has been one of steady operation capitalising on our experience. This stability and confidence in the routine operation aspects of the pool has allowed us to focus very strongly on-site development and fund raising (see below). Once again, we were delighted to retain the entire management team and the successful mix of sessions (public, lanes, parent and child, families, ladies therapeutic, adult general swim). We continued to offer private bookings and the school use and swimming lessons. These offers are still economical despite our (first ever) entry price rise, well attended and greatly appreciated by families in the area.

Continuing with previous successful experience we got the pool ready in advance of the swimming season and used it to train the cadre of lifeguards. And this is a significant contribution to the social, educational and personal development we provide to Wotton youth. As before this meant we had a useful quota of freshly trained-and-tested supervisors to get the season going, along with the group of lifeguards who we trained last year and remained in the town — many go away to college/university each year.

As regards the facilities we obtained planning consent on 6 December 2016 for the refurbishment of the changing rooms, including recladding the exterior, building a veranda at the south end of the building and replacing the asbestos roof. This fired the starting gun for the work to proceed and in January, using both volunteer and professional labour, we dismantled the outside of the changing rooms, replaced the rotting structure and re-clad it in weatherproof natural wood. At the same time, with the plans and planning consent granted, it was possible to start fundraising.

Considerable input has been obtained from the local community (Wotton Triathlon Club, Heaven of the South, St Mary's PCC, Wotton Recreational Trust, and several very generous local donations/fund-raising events). In addition, a successful bid (£31,400) was made to The Cory Environmental Trust. This money was used for the oak frame for the veranda and the new roof – both are now in place. Also, a planning application was made to install solar heating on the roof of the building. This was approved on 3 August 2017 and this enabled a bid to the Summerfield Trust to be made for financial support (£8,600). Summerfield approved this grant in mid-November.

As with previous years we have arranged a public meeting to inform and consult the public of Wotton who pay through their council tax for us to run the facility this was attended by 17 people. And we have continued to operate in accord with the keynotes we defined for the facility last year, namely: safe, high quality, indefinitely ongoing, low maintenance, community enterprise and fun for all.

Alan George

Some photos below showing the replaced roof, the solar panel installation and the new veranda and decking





It has been another great year for Wotton Community Sports Foundation (WCSF), which has seen us rebrand with new logos to reflect our successes.

This year's main highlight was the successful Party in the PARC festival, where we welcomed over 1,000 people onto our site on a very hot June day, with local food, drink, music and activities. The event helped raise significant revenue that we have put primarily toward our sinking fund for future 3G and Astroturf pitch replacement/preventative maintenance, but also towards the BMX and pump track development – which has now reached our target and is our next planned development project, with construction planned for this earthwork season.

The festival proved so popular that we are now less than 10 weeks away from the 2018 edition, a first step to making this an annual event for the Wotton community to be proud of. This success has also encouraged other organisations to think of the PARC as a suitable venue for community events, including a potential food festival and a car rally.

Sports usage continues to be the main activity on our site, and it's always great to see so many different people using our facilities during the week and at weekends – the congestion in the Katharine Lady Berkeley's School (KLBS) car park is a sign of how popular the PARC is! This year has seen continued growth for the junior sections of both Wotton Rovers and Wotton Hockey Club, with an increase in membership for Wotton Rugby Football Club, establishment of walking football for the more mature players, girls' football training and specialist goalkeeper training sessions also being run on the 3G pitch.

The regular 'parkrun' has now amassed in the region of 75 events, including a special Christmas Day run that was very well supported, with Santas, elves and reindeers all jogging round the PARC. Typically there are around 90 runners, even in the depths of winter with a total distance likely in excess of 35,000 km having been run since the inaugural event in October 2016.

The Safe Access Path completed last year has really opened up our site – in addition to the joggers, runners and those using the path to access the skate park, many local residents have welcomed the availability of a new walking route for recreation and the many new benches around the site have created lots of spots to enjoy the views.

The ecology of the site continues to improve – more tree planting in the spring and autumn completed the small hedge along the boundary of the new access path. Despite the challenges of the site, with poor drainage, hungry deer and rabbits, many of the saplings planted are growing strongly. In addition to the deer, barn owl and sparrow hawks, we've also had reports of a kingfisher and an otter in the drainage ponds – both are welcome visitors!

Looking ahead, we're now in a position to construct the BMX and pump track during the summer months of 2018. Based upon the success of the skate park, we are certain this will be a fantastic addition to our facilities. The skate park itself has recently had its annual inspection and, aside a few minor issues, is performing very well, especially considering its high levels of usage.

The Sensory Garden proposal generated such a level of interest that a dedicated project group have pushed this opportunity forward, with designs currently being finalised and, with the aid of sponsorship, we are hopeful that this project will also be completed over this coming summer/autumn.

We've received a generous pledge of funding support from Barnwood Trust, and have started planning the improvements to parking and access on our site, including a high level review process that has seen a

significant development in terms of location and the longer-term vision for the PARC. Development of plans are underway, as a result we hope to make this our key construction project for 2019 – this will again need fundraising and tendering, but we now have sufficient delivery experience to approach these projects with confidence.

The longer-term vision for the PARC remains to develop clubhouse facilities within the PARC site to help to grow and foster sporting and community endeavours across a wide range of ages and abilities. Local development in the Wotton, Kingswood and Charfield areas will undoubtedly increase demand and, as such we see a very real need for ongoing improvement. Linking in to this vision, WCSF are involved with the Greenway – a pathway connecting the three main communities in the PARC catchment that removes the need to travel on the busy, narrow and winding roads surrounding the PARC.

The Sport Wotton joint venture has been running for another year, with further staff recruitment and a professional approach to managing the customer-facing operations of our joint sports facilities. Both WCSF and KLBS facilities have seen increased revenue, thanks to the excellent marketing by manager Sam Failes and the team.

After 8 years as WCSF Chairman, Barnaby Beere has stepped down, with Mark Easton now residing in this post for 2018. In Barnaby's 8 year tenure, WCSF has achieved much. Not only in terms of the physical infrastructure and facilities on our site, but also the links made with so many different groups and organisations, all of whom are working together to improve opportunities for the whole community in and around Wotton. We are truly thankful to Barnaby for his endless enthusiasm and energy.

WCSF is very grateful for the support from not only Wotton-under-Edge Town Council, but also the multitude of other local groups and organisations that have provided much needed support.

Regards

Mark Easton, WCSF Chairman 2018 <http://www.wcsf.org.uk>



Report to the Town Council 2017 – 2018

The committee which was formed in March 2016 has now settled in, the Treasurer has changed and three new members have joined.

Fund raising has continued this year; money has been raised through Town Hall Teas, the Charities Fair, and the monthly lottery.

The field was used in summer 2017 for a fund-raising event by Meningitis Now and the Wotton Baptist Church for a play scheme and barbecue. The committee continues to look at ways to open up the field to other users during the summer months.

The football pitch underwent its annual remedial work in June 2017. Wotton Rovers continue to use the field weekly during the winter playing 28 senior matches and 35 junior matches. We have recently put the grass cutting contract out to tender. The updating of the changing rooms has continued, the water heater has been repaired and serviced and the walls painted. Our next project is to replace the door and windows.

At present we have five pieces of outdoor fitness equipment on order and we have sourced a football goalmouth to be used by 'teens'. We have applied to Tesco Bags of Help for funds to replace the old rusty metal benches with new benches made from recycled materials. The old metal gates to the field close to the Social Club have also been replaced.

In March 2017 the committee, through Fields in Trust, began the process of negotiating a new 20-year lease with the Pavilion Sports and Social Club. This continues and will hopefully be in place in the next couple of months, this was delayed by the Land Registration process.

Our big event last year was the 85th Anniversary Celebration over the weekend of 8/9/10 September. We had a live band in the marquee on the evening of Friday 8th, a Boxing Event on Saturday 9th and a Family Fun day on Sunday 10th with various competition classes for children to enter and lots of activities. A lot of work went into the planning and running of this event and due to the generosity of our sponsors we were able to offer nearly all the activities for children free. The weather was against us but all those who attended the event had a great time.



The committee learned a lot from running this event and since then we have taken steps to canvas the houses overlooking the field and the wider Synwell community to try and gain the residents' views about the type of events they would like to see on the field. This is ongoing.

We would like to thank Wotton Town Council for their support during the year, especially with the siting a defibrillator on the side of the Social Club.

Anne Hartley, Secretary



Wotton under Edge Historical Society Museum & Heritage Centre

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Wotton under Edge Historical Society, Museum and Heritage Centre -2017/18.

In 2017 the volunteers at the Wotton Heritage Centre have worked hard to sustain the momentum built up over the 2 previous years. The results were mixed. We had higher income from the shop, higher investment in hardware, considerable conservation progress and data collection but slightly less visitors to the centre over 2016/17 (on a par with the rest of the Cotswolds*).

The Historical Society pushed forward with conservation and data collection projects while developing the Visitor Information Centre with better layout and new (quality) stock.

In the Museum in 2017 we held three exhibitions and nine talks:

- 1) Exhibition 1: Trades and Traders
- 2) Exhibition 2: Lawmakers and Law Breakers
- 3) Exhibition 3: A Grave Undertaking

In 2018 we are currently showing "A Look Back at the Good Old Days of Education at the Heritage Centre.



We invested more money than ever before on conservation in 2017 with the purchase of storage boxes for many of our artefacts and in addition, a large aluminium map chest to replace the old wooden one. These were purchased with various grants including support from the Lions of Wotton and many others.

Data acquisition for Adlib has increased at a pace due to the recruitment of new "inputers" and a strict regime enforced by our Chairman Reg Clarke. This to ensure the data is compatible. Keeping an eye on the future is important as we plan to go online over the next two years and the data must be "perfect" and compatible with what the public needs when searching their history. We have a new three year plan in place.

The Gazette negatives we received from Dursley Historical Society in 2016/17 were scanned by our Curator David Baird and are now safely stored on our computers. We have been unable to secure any more photos for now but are working on how we might obtain more negatives before they disappear forever.

The Wotton Youth Partnership project to record on film people in their later years was partially successful due to the enthusiasm of two 6th form students. We have some recordings stored and are working to add more in 2018 with the help of KLB School.

In 2017 we have continued to work with:

- a) the Cotswold group of Tourist Information Managers
- b) the Tourism Network set up by Dursley Town Council to cover the Cotswold Severn Vale.

The Cotswold group reported a slight reduction in Tourist visitors in 2017, an effect we felt in Wotton. Dursley Town Council continue to support the expansion of Tourism in the area and keep Wotton very much in the loop. We were disappointed in Stroud District Council who left Wotton out of a Tourist video and map designed to promote the district.

We continue in our quest for Funding while being grateful to the Town Council for their support. We have challenges ahead as costs begin to rise and this will lead to more fundraising via the shop and other activities

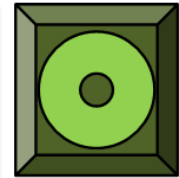
We sadly lost one of our curatorial colleagues in 2017. John White will be missed for his wide knowledge and enthusiasm for Wotton's history. By Jeff Walshe, Heritage Centre Committee. <http://www.wottonheritage.com>

One of our many volunteers at the Heritage Centre Rhona



Our President Prof. Mark Horton at the annual Berkeley Dig.





Report from Wotton under Edge & District Recreational Trust-2017/18.

In 2017 the Recreational Trust Members continued to support the Bowls Club and other affiliated organisations to the Charity. There were still funds available for distribution from the cash injection made by the Cinema volunteer management in 2016. Applications were invited from various groups in Wotton and the surrounding District. Applications were received throughout the year for grants from the limited funds available. Grants were awarded to the following organisations.

2017-2.1 :Wotton BluesFest - £1000 towards the Blues Festival at a total cost of £3,500.

2017-3.1 :Wotton Community Sports Foundation- £1000 towards the Party in the Parc fundraising festival at a total cost of £4,000.

2017-3.2 :Wotton Swimming Pool - £1000 towards the Pool reconstruction at a total cost of £56,000.

2018-1.1 :Wotton Under Edge Bowls Club - £1000 towards refurbishment work at a total cost of £2,510.

2018-1.2 :Wotton Walking Festival - £711 towards the Walking Festival at a total cost of £1542.

Other applications were received during 2017/18 and were rejected. They did not fully comply with the criteria specified by the Trust.

The constitution regulates the way funding is distributed and is intended to stimulate new activities in the Town. Applications for match-funding new projects and require some fund raising activities to take place. The applicants must be constituted; the Trust does not fund the running costs of organisations preferring Projects with legacy aspirations. We welcome new applications for the period 2018/19 and donations to our investment fund.

In addressing outstanding incomplete documents in the Trust management, the committee were able to reboot the Bowls Club Licence and Agreement to continue using the grounds and Clubhouse. The 2003 versions of these two documents had not been fully signed. After a review then agreement some minor changes, both parties were able to sign and ensure continuity of operation under the original terms by the Bowls Club.

The affiliated groups all reported throughout the year and submitted accounts which we consolidated into a document submitted to the Charity Commission after a review by Burton Sweet accountants.

It was agreed by the committee to set aside a sum of £5000 to cover (along with affiliation fees) the expenses of running the Trust. It should be noted that the cost of Insurance and Accountants is rising and will eventually use up these funds unless further income is obtained at some point in the future.

Jeff Walshe/Chair – WRT jeffwalshe@gmail.com

Background.

In the 1970s local residents mounted a campaign to develop part of the land in Drylease into a Bowls Club. The public raised the required funds and help was sought from the Town Council and District Council (who owned the land). This resulted in a sale of “Bowling Green” land from SDC to Wotton Town Council (WTC) for £25,500 including covenant 6, which stated that the land was only to be used as bowling green.

In 1984 the Town Council created the **Wotton under Edge and District Recreational Trust** to manage the assets under a **Declaration of Trust** document dated 1984. The original four Trustees handed over responsibility to the Management Committee once the Trust had been set up and registered with the Charity Commission.

The Bowls Club is run as an autonomous group under the terms of two documents:

- i) **Agreement between the Recreational Trust and Trustees of the Bowls Club-2003/now 2017**
- ii) **Licence between the Recreational Trust and Trustees of the Bowls Club-2003/now 2017**

The Recreational Trust also manages the recreational area named as Streamfield on behalf of the owners – The Town Council.

In 2003 the Recreational Trust expanded its umbrella activities by affiliating organisations with low financial turnover. This enabled those organisations to use the Charity number in their fundraising activities. When any organisation grew to a size where they could be self-sufficient, they left the Recreational Trust and set up independently.

The Trust has been supported with income from modest affiliation fees (since 2003) and the Cinema since 2006. There have been many recipients throughout Wotton as the Trust addressed requests for financial help for a variety of projects. All accounts are registered with the Charity Commission.

Report on County Council Matters to Wotton Town Council Annual Assembly

23rd April 2018

County Council Elections, May 2017

The Conservatives now have an overall majority on the County Council, having gained a net six seats from Labour, UKIP and independents. Liberal Democrats retained all 14 seats they held and with all the same councillors! The Conservatives took all the Cabinet places, plus a new one and took the chairmanships of all the council committees except one they can't constitutionally hold where they supported Labour.

My roles on the County Council

My committee memberships remain unchanged and I continue as my group's lead member on these. I also became a member of a Highways Cabinet Panel, which monitors the awarding of the three new highways contracts. I also represent the county on various outside bodies.

County Council Budget 2018/19

The council has had to absorb a continuing year on year reduction in Government revenue support grant (RSG). By the end of the present five-year comprehensive spending review period in 2019/20 RSG will have reduced by 84%. In the Government's financial settlement, the County Council was accepted as a 100% business rates retention pilot. This also means it gets no RSG this year.

At the February budget meeting the Council took up half the extra increase that is now being permitted without a referendum, adding 0.5% to council tax on top of the 1.99% previously proposed. Most of the extra money raised through this and other changes would enable an additional £5M funding for Children & Families following the highly critical Ofsted inspection. To this must be added the 2% permitted by Government specifically to fund Adult Social Care, giving a total council tax increase of 4.49%.

Several amendments were proposed to the budget by the Liberal Democrat group and also by the Labour & Green alliance. These were in part accepted but did not alter the final revenue budget for 2018/19 of £412.90M which gives a Band D precept of £1,232.21, an increase of £52.95 over 2017/18.

The money allocated to councillors to recommend for use in their individual divisions for the coming year is £20k for Highways Local (following a successful Lib Dem amendment to increase it from a proposed £10k: last year it was £30k) and £10k for a new Growing our Communities fund which replaces the previous £5k Children's Activity Fund.

For Public Rights of Way my group had asked for an extra officer to tackle the large backlog of requests for definitive map modification orders. The administration agreed to look at this. The 2026 cut-off date for using historical evidence will increase the number of applications.

Bids for a £300k project on domestic abuse focusing on young people who have either witnessed or been victims, and £200k for the expanding of the self-harm hotline for vulnerable people were not agreed but the administration said that it will carry out an in-depth review using a scrutiny committee and report back in September. A bid to reinstate a £32k cut in mental health support was not supported.

A £50k per year grant to each district council to support youth work, following the cutback in county provision, has ended after 3 years. The administration was not prepared to continue it.

Highway Contracts

A post-election mind-change by the Conservatives meant the Amey contract has not been extended beyond April 2019.

There will now to be three contracts dealing with different highways aspects:

Term Maintenance Contract for seven years starting next April to deliver routine highways maintenance. Five contractors have been shortlisted. Amey did not put in a bid.

Final tenders are to be submitted in July and a decision made in September this year.

Structural Maintenance Contract a two-year contract to deliver roads resurfacing work, which Tarmac won and has now started.

Professional Services Contract to support council staff in specialised detail design work such as on bridges, geotechnical (landslips), drainage schemes as well as to provide design and project management support for major schemes.

This will mean that some services, involving around 46 staff, will return to be delivered in-house. Public rights of way staff have already transferred back.

Road Safety

Shortly before last year's county budget meeting the Police and Crime Commissioner withdrew the contract for NDORS driver retraining from the Road Safety Partnership. An emergency change protected the road safety budget for a year. A review during the year has led to a cutback in staff previously used for road safety educational work and road safety being restricted to statutory requirements. In 2017 the Stroud district area had its lowest number of road casualties ever and no fatalities. Will it continue to improve?

Ofsted inspection of the County Council's Children's Services

An inspection was carried out last spring, but the findings not published until after the County Council and Parliamentary elections. It found that overall the children's services were inadequate. The experiences and progress of care leavers required improvement and leadership, management and governance were inadequate. Several children's services senior managers left the council. The former cabinet member with this area of responsibility did not stand for re-election in May. Ofsted required the council to submit an Improvement Plan addressing the recommendations and findings of their report by 19th September. The Plan was agreed by the Cabinet on 18th September!

In the latest visit, Ofsted inspectors saw some recent improvements, but said children in need of help and protection in Gloucestershire continue to experience delay at every point of their involvement with children's services.

Motions at County Council meetings during the year

Around twenty motions have come before the council in the last twelve months. At last September's council meeting the Conservatives appeared to filibuster, preventing some motions being discussed. At the meeting this March they used their majority to push through amendments that greatly diluted the wording of most of the motions. For example, a Green/Lib Dem motion that called on the council to phase out the use of unnecessary single use plastic products in all its buildings and at council events by January 2019 and to end the council's purchase and procurement of single use plastics was amended to put January 2019 back to "by 2020" and to only cease buying single use plastics by 2025.

Highways Local Funding

My allocation for 2017/18 included contributions to resurfacing of Old Town, carriageway patching in Shepherds Leaze and footway resurfacing in Synwell Lane totalling £23k.

Children's Activity Fund

In the final year of this fund my £5k allocation included contributions to an "edible playground" (£804) at the Blue Coat School and multi-sports for disabled children at KLB (£1107.40).

John Cordwell