**A Review of Westbury Park Community Association, October 2019**

**1 Background**

The Community Association was inaugurated with great enthusiasm in 2011 with the purpose of achieving a number of aims as listed below. A Management Committee comprising about a dozen volunteers and number of sub groups – a Planning and Design Group, a Traffic Group and a Communications Group - were set up to help achieve these aims. The Association also brought the already established Festival Committee under its wing.

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| **The Aims of The Community Association** |
| (i) To encourage and promote community spirit and cohesion, and the involvement of local people in community affairs, (ii) To help people in Westbury Park exert greater influence on decisions affecting their lives; (iii) To safeguard and improve the physical and environmental character of Westbury Park;(iv) To encourage and promote social welfare and safety;(v) To safeguard and improve local recreational, leisure, cultural, educational and social facilities, services and activities;(vi) To support local institutions, groups and businesses.vii) To support and influence the work of the two Neighbourhood Partnerships covering the Westbury Park area. |

**2 Activities 2011 – 2019**

Activities over the eight years have included :-

* Making representations on planning applications (eg the Waitrose refurbishment, backland development at Russell Grove, the nursing home extensions in Belvedere Road).
* Publishing a Westbury Park Design Guide.
* Making representations on Council policies including resident parking and proposed library closures.
* Making representations on other issues including bus services and 99 Devonshire Road.
* Successfully bidding for funds from the two neighbourhood partnerships covering Westbury Park (eg. halos on the road crossing on Coldharbour Road, notice boards).
* Organising social events including concerts in St Albans Church Hall and social evenings at Westbury Park pub.
* Circulating a quarterly newsletter and a monthly “What’s On” for members
* Supporting the Westbury Park Festival.

**3 Challenges facing the Association**

1. The number of volunteers actively supporting the Association has dwindled over the years – the Management Committee now has five members compared with a dozen when it was established in 2011 and the Planning / Design and Traffic Groups have not met for more than three years. Consequently the ability to respond to issues, to organise new activities (eg. social events) and to undertake core activities (eg monitor planning applications) is limited. Over the past eighteen months activities have been low key - largely confined to producing the monthly “What’s On” and informing members of current issues (eg. resident parking, proposed changes to bus routes). The Festival continues to run successfully from year to year thanks to the Festival Committee.
2. With the demise of the neighbourhood partnerships in March 2017 the Association no longer has access to funds to support local projects. The demise of the partnerships has also meant that we have lost a key lobbying / representation channel with the City Council and other decision making bodies. New community led partnerships (eg The Henleaze Forum) have evolved but these cannot fully replicate the benefits and influence of the City Council led neighbourhood partnerships.
3. There are currently no major area wide issues on which the Community Association needs to engage the local community and make representations on their behalf. This might change should the Council alter its stance on new resident parking schemes which are currently on hold (*Over the period 2013 – 2016 the major issue of resident parking generated much interest and strong feelings: the Community Association helped to gather views and make representations to the Council*). One other possible major issue where the Community Association might have an important role to play is about the future of the St. Christopher’s site should this site become available for development.
4. The world has moved on since 2011 with an increasing number of people using inter - active social media platforms. Many residents now use street focussed Facebook and Whats App groups and other digital social networks (eg Next Door) for messaging and sharing local information. The Community Association has to decide whether it has a role in this new social media world and, if so, how it should best communicate with members .

**4 Options for the Future**

1. The Community Association tries to “tick along” as it has done over the past eighteen months.
2. The Community Association focusses on one or two areas where it can most add value (eg. organising more social events, focussing on major issues) provided that there are sufficient volunteers to enable this to happen,
3. The Community Association is either suspended or wound up unless new volunteers come forward to re-energise and re-focuss the Association. This might seem rather extreme but with a number of existing long serving Committee members standing down this might necessarily be the default option.

*Kevin Chidgey / WPCA / 2nd October 2019*