

Watermead Annual Parish Meeting

**Thursday 18 May 2017 at 7.00pm
The Village Hall, Watermead**

Attendees: Cllr Severn (Chair), Cllr A Schwab, Cllr I Schwab, Cllr Singleton, Cllr Toler, Cllr Rose, Noreen Shardlow (Clerk), Michelle Jackson (Assistant Parish Clerk), AVDC & BCC Cllr Netta Glover, AVDC Cllr Ashley Bond plus 6 members of the public

- 1. Apologies**
Cllr Gent.
- 2. To agree the minutes of 19 May 2016**
The Minutes were agreed and signed by the Chairman.
- 3. To discuss any matters arising from those minutes**
None.
- 4. Watermead Parish Council**
Chairman's Annual Review May 2017

Introduction and thanks

Thanks to everyone in our community for supporting the parish council in what has proved another challenging year. We have steadily worked towards our goal of stopping the thoroughly appalling crematorium development. Much has been achieved to date: The planning permission has been quashed by the Court of Appeal. Our next community challenge is to see off the proposal to build flats in the Piazza car park. In common with other parishes, we are vulnerable to inappropriate and speculative applications to build owing to the lack of a Local Plan.

Planning matters are dealt with in detail later in this report.

An enormous vote of thanks to my councillor colleagues. I would like to acknowledge the support given to me and to the community by our effective and dedicated team, all of whom remain fully committed to public service and ensuring that Watermead remains a special and pleasant place to live.

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Noreen Shardlow, our Parish Clerk who, once again, has worked, on a voluntary basis, for countless hours, to help prepare our legal case against the crematorium. She is supported by Michelle Jackson, our assistant clerk. Cllr Irina Schwab has offered legal expertise and professional legal services, charging highly discounted fees and doing much work free of charge to ensure our Counsel, Richard Kimblin QC has all the information needed, achieving further fee economies.

Thank you to Mary Singleton, Editor and her team of volunteers who produce Village View; so much enjoyed by residents and others. Our former advertising manager, Chris Cooling, has moved away, but Phil Toler is already proving a great asset, as his successor. Our advertisers make it possible to publish the magazine, please support them. If you would like to advertise please get in touch.

Our list of those to thank includes many volunteers who have helped us throughout the year with leaflet and Village View delivery, the Christmas Fair and Carol Concert as well as litter picking. Special thanks to Dave Lang and Graham Severn for their continuing efforts in keeping Watermead clean and tidy by litter-picking and reporting damage. Thanks also to everyone who helps to keep us looking our best. Picking up stray pieces of litter and removing weeds from paths and road gutters outside your own property makes a real difference. It would be too expensive to employ a contractor to do this work on a regular basis – everything helps.

The way we work and communicate

Our channels of communication include our noticeboards, website, leaflets and magazine. We have a team of helpers who deliver leaflets. This works, as evidenced by our having managed to deliver a leaflet to every home over a single weekend in response to the recent Piazza car park planning application. Please keep an eye on the noticeboards in the Piazza tunnel, on the main road by the telephone box and on our website. It would help us enormously if you would join our mailing list by emailing Noreen, or via the Contact Us link on the website (www.watermead-pc.gov.uk).

Community Groups are warmly encouraged to keep in touch. Mary Singleton is always pleased to receive articles and information about local groups for Village View. You can come to the Parish Council meetings on the third Thursday of each month (excepting August and December) each of which include a public session. Our meetings start at 7.30pm and agendas are published on the noticeboard and website.

We work closely with our County and District councils through our local councillors and by attending briefings, planning meetings and discussing matters relating to Watermead with officers and other councillors.

Issues and Challenges

Crematorium It is, to say the least, extremely disappointing that our Local Authority (AVDC) has not enforced the Court of Appeal Judgement, but we will do absolutely everything in our power to stop the crematorium. We will not give up now. Our community has joined together to support us in this fight. You will be aware by now that the Court of Appeal Judgement has meant we have recovered all legal fees spent in the case to date.

The fight continues. The developer must now submit new documentation. You will understand that detailed information will only become available when the new application documents are submitted by the applicants. Updated information and details of how to comment, when the committee meeting will be, and how to help will be sent to all on our emailing list, on our website and via leaflets in due course.

Piazza car park The highly speculative, and totally inappropriate, application to build flats in the Piazza car park has been met with much dismay. Over 200 letters of objection have been submitted to AVDC via the planning portal, and the PC has responded in detail to the application, objecting strongly, reflecting the views of our community, providing planning reasons to parishioners and assisting with consultation response for many.

In respect of the planning process there is no more to be done (at the time of writing this report) until all statutory consultees have responded, the officer's report is to hand and any committee meeting date is confirmed. Once this is known, we will pass on the information to all and hope that as many residents as possible attend the meeting to support our speakers who will set out the parish position and technical objections on behalf of all. It is very important that this action is carefully orchestrated and planned and that we make the most of the short time available to speak by choosing speakers, agreeing the detailed objections based on planning law. Any necessary legal advice will be given.

The issue of the Piazza car park application has arisen following a report by the freeholders that extensive repairs and maintenance work is required to the shops and flats involving costs in the region of half a million pounds plus. Businesses and residents were contacted by the managing agents last year who advised that the work was needed and commenced the process of consulting. Properties are owned leasehold and the freeholders have suggested that if the property owners agreed to a variation in their leases to allow car parking arrangements to be altered they would, effectively, offer to absorb a proportion of the repair bills.

The Parish Council was made aware of this and is extremely concerned, not least because our valued shops and services could, potentially, be lost if costs are uneconomic. To date we have obtained Counsel's Opinion regarding the legal position of the commercial leaseholders. This is now to hand. Once again, we need to know the result of the planning application before further action can be taken. The flat owners formed a residents' association to represent their views to the freeholders and to oppose the development.

The absence of an Aylesbury Vale Local Plan remains a persistent concern. Following the planning White Paper it was further delayed but is expected to be sent for consultation this summer. However, Watermead was identified in the original VALP as being unsuitable for any future development and this part of the Plan has been considered as a 'retained' policy in recent planning determinations.

Devolved services and highways

We remain frustrated by the appalling condition of roads in Buckinghamshire. The County Council has reduced repair programmes further with less technicians on the ground and little budget to repair potholes and road damage. For a moment, the rising bollards in Lark Vale are working.

Land

As previously reported we have tried to obtain grant funding for some time to fund anti-erosion work to the banks of the large lake by the Memorial Garden and the closed wildlife copse. We have had no success, and given the urgency of the work, the PC resolved to borrow some of the cost from the Public Works Loan Board. This effectively means we borrow the money, at highly advantageous annuity rates from the government, repaying capital and interest over time, but allowing us to have the work completed before we lose more of the banks. County Councillor Netta Glover was able to donate £400 towards and cost of the works. We hope that the solution being installed will save the

bank for many years, and provide a ramp for geese and other wading birds which will stop the bank erosion. If dog owners let their dogs into the lake, please ensure they use the slide once it has been installed. Dogs also cause damage to the banks.

Our ground works team works tirelessly to keep our land in good condition, as well as the grass verges. Repairs are undertaken year-round, with a planned programme of work to trees to ensure our wildlife and nesting habitats are protected and fences maintained. We have had incidents of people breaking into wildlife areas and disturbing nests, we lost a moorhen nest last week. We now have an agreement in place with the neighbourhood Police team to ensure that this behaviour is prevented with trespassers being removed from these areas. Nesting birds are protected by law.

A delightful series of images on our website has been provided by Irina Schwab and Eric Rose showing the ducklings, coots, goslings and cygnets. There is also a video, by local videographer Colin Baker on the website showing Watermead's wildlife.

Parish Precept

Our Parish Precept (council tax payable to Watermead Parish Council) was set at £73,125 an overall increase of 2.99% for the current financial year, costing an average Band D household £1.46 per week. To confirm, no increase for legal fees has been made in any year, we paid all costs from reserves and normal operating budget and have now recovered all costs in respect of the Judicial Reviews and Court of Appeal cases. The modest increase this year is to cover increased costs of maintenance and other work.

Community Activities

Our **Christmas Fair and Carol Concert** in December were both, as ever, a huge success. Thank you to Graham Severn for organising the wonderful Christmas Fair and Dot Toler for the excellent catering on the day. We raised a significant sum for charity from both events. The Carol Concert enjoyed singing carols led by Safe Sax, our Christmas band. It was a very wet night but this did nothing to dampen attendees' enthusiasm. Father Christmas was his usual jolly self, handing out presents and having his photograph taken many times, ably assisted by his local elves. Our thanks to Mary Singleton and her WI colleagues for organising the carols and the usual delicious snacks with warming mulled wine, such a feature of Christmas in Watermead.

May Fair

Organised by Kelvin and Nicky Wong of the Watermead Inn the inaugural May Fair was a huge success. The May Queen presided over the day where there was a good selection of craft stalls and other retailers. Maypole dancing, Morris Men and many other activities featured with food and drink available on the field. The Watermead Bake Off provided some stiff competition for cakes on a May Day theme and the judging panel had a challenging decision to make. The Parish Council lent the services of our own Mary Queen of Cakes (Mary Singleton) to the judging panel. The day was such a success I am pleased to say that it will be held again this year on Sunday 28th May.

Best allotment competition Our allotments continue to be a much-loved

facility, with all plots now let. A competition for the best allotment, judged by Eric Rose, was keenly contested and won by Graham Howse. Allotment produce is of high quality and is sold at occasional sales during the year, which benefits all

The **Piscatorials** continue to rent, manage and bailiff the small lake. They have their difficulties and water levels and fish stocks have been low. The Piscatorials do have some memberships available, the joining fee is just £10 and subscription £40 a year. If you would like to try before you join the Parish Clerk has day tickets available.

The **Christmas lights** competition was also keenly-fought with many of us lighting up our front gardens. We can probably be seen from space! The winners this year were Mr & Mrs Leander of 3 Watermeadow. Their beautiful red and gold display was enjoyed and commented on by so many people. Frank & Jeanette Glynn, Last year's winners, once again, did a fantastic job winning the special award. It was decided that each year a new winner will be chosen, but previous winners are encouraged to build on past efforts and try to win the special prize.

Irina Schwab also suggested a **Summer Gardens Competition**, to be judged at the end of July – the judging panel will tour Watermead at the end of July, with winners announced during August. We can't enter the Best Kept Village Competition because we do not have a Church or Village Green, but we can have our own.

Our hanging baskets will be installed shortly, which always make Watermead look very welcoming during summer.

Cricket event

Julian Gent is working with the Bucks County Cricket Board and Watermead Village Cricket Club (WVCC) to arrange a summer cricket event this year. Details will be available shortly, but it promises to be a great day out for all the family, giving young cricketers the opportunity to have a go, and older hands to offer the benefit of their experience.

WVCC Memberships are available. Please email watermeadcricket@aol.com or visit the website <http://watermeadvillagecricketclub.weebly.com/> where you can register your interest. The Extraordinary General Meeting held in April proved popular with over 30 new members joining and committee members elected.

Fundraising

We were delighted to welcome The Stoke Association to Watermead for the first time for their Resolution Run which raised the astonishing sum of £13,337. A thoroughly enjoyable, if muddy, day with elite runners showing the rest of us up and a warm up hosted by Phil Gomm and the Reflexions gym.

The MacMillan Coffee Morning, organised by Marcia Lang was, once again, a great success. As well as raising funds for MacMillan, neighbours enjoy the opportunity to meet and the event is always very much enjoyed by those attending.

Community activities are warmly encouraged. They play a large part in making Watermead such a good place to live whether it be the WI, arts and crafts activities, exercise classes or events.

The Coming Year

Statistics from our Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign (MVAS) already prove that we have a speeding problem. This machine will be seen in new areas in Watermead, backed up by Sentinel SpeedWatch which is a radar speed device manned by volunteers. This device videos speeding vehicles, capturing their registration number and vehicle model. This information is then passed to the Police. Drivers receive a warning letter initially but if they are caught speeding again the Police will take appropriate action. Anyone driving at excessively dangerous speeds will receive a visit from the Police and may be prosecuted.

Volunteers are needed to man the device which we share with Berryfields. The plan is to run the device in each other's parish to avoid having to trap people you know as far as possible. The Sentinel Speed Watch equipment has been donated by the Local Area Forum, a first for Watermead, we are most grateful. Two of us have received training in running the device and we will train others as we move forward with the scheme. The message is clear – SPEEDING IS HIGHLY DANGEROUS AND ANTI-SOCIAL – Please don't speed.

Cllr Adrian Schwab reported that it had been an incredible year for Watermead Parish Council. For a small Parish Council to go to the High Court to fight the crematorium and win just shows what the PC is capable of. He gave thanks to Sue Severn as Chair for her support, guidance, energy and determination.

Cllr Glover's Report - Buckinghamshire County Council report 2016/17

In the past 12 months we have been working on a range of priorities and projects with our partners, investing resources and commitment into achieving our vision for Buckinghamshire which is set out in our three strategic aims:

- Safeguarding Our Vulnerable
- Creating Opportunities and Building Self Reliance
- Keeping Buckinghamshire Thriving and Attractive

Here is an overview of some of this work:

- We are helping more older and vulnerable people stay independent for longer via our ground-breaking Prevention Matters programme. Council grants have enabled local communities to develop a range of new services and initiatives including a community bus for disabled residents in Haddenham and a new scheme to support elderly carers in Aylesbury.
- Latest figures show that schools in Buckinghamshire are amongst some of the best in the country with 93% being classed by Ofsted as either good or outstanding. There are also many reasons to be positive

about our children's services. In a recent visit Ofsted recognised the progress which has been made. They acknowledged that social work practice has improved and social workers often see children more frequently than required by national guidance. Inspectors found there has been "significant" improvement in the timeliness and quality of health assessments for looked after children and that there is evidence of proactive work to tackle the evil of child sexual exploitation.

- We continue to invest our resources into protecting vulnerable children. £39m was invested in 2013/14 and this rose to nearly £60m last year. This has enabled us to invest in our workforce and IT systems to ensure we have the right skills and capacity available to protect those most in need. We have more than doubled the size of our First Response team so referrals are dealt with even more swiftly and effectively.
- Our Families First project is a great example of partnership working and was recently praised by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Since 2012 we have helped over 3,000 families access the right services at the right time, helping them to build resilience so they are able to deal with problems that arise and know where to go.
- In the past year we have helped many individual communities around the county to pursue initiatives and projects of their own via funding from our Local Area Forums. Residents in Buckingham were given the chance to vote on how a pot of over £9,000 was spent in their local community in our first ever ballot – Buckingham Decides. Other areas have benefitted in different ways from providing important medical cards to all households in Winslow to new sports and fitness equipment for local clubs in Waddesdon.
- Communities across Buckinghamshire have been benefitting from our Active Bucks programme, taking part in physical activities that they have chosen to suit the needs of their local population. At the end of December, over 1,800 Bucks residents had taken part in an activity – with around 80% of them previously having not done enough exercise. The activities range from the traditional like yoga and jogging to LARPing – Live Action Role Play, Quidditch, photography walks and dog agility courses.
- There are numerous examples of other initiatives happening across the county to benefit local communities. Our Chesham wellbeing project is a really community-focussed scheme which brings together different organisations to provide extra support to those residents who need it and in Southcourt - one of our most deprived estates - our youth workers have reduced the scourge of anti-social behaviour by more than 50%.
- As most residents will know we have been working hard for several years in opposition to HS2. In recent months our focus has been on securing adequate mitigation measures for our communities and countryside that will be affected by the development. We have been successful in achieving a package of measures for Great Missenden

which will bring road improvements and improved safety.

- This year we've worked hard on protecting our residents from the elements. Residents in Great Horwood, Princes Risborough, Marlow, Seer Green and Wooburn Moor (among many others) can now sleep a little easier thanks to the new drainage we've installed to prevent flooding and more communities including Burnham, Gerrards Cross and Cuddington are set to benefit during 2017.
- We continue to seek ways to streamline our services and save money using innovative means. By joining forces with Surrey County Council to provide a joint Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service, residents and businesses have benefitted from our pooled resources and expertise. In addition to saving money, last year the team received national acclaim for its work in the form of two awards in the Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise Awards 2016. We are also in the process of merging our HR services with the London Borough of Harrow which will give us opportunities to share knowledge, generate new business and find more efficient ways of working. The agreement has already saved Bucks £80,000 in management costs. It will save a further £315,000 in 2017, with a cumulative saving of around £600,000 after the third year. It will also enable us to sell HR services to other local authorities, bringing in extra income to the council.
- Our Energy from Waste plant at Greatmoor was officially opened in October by His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester. The innovative facility is revolutionising the way we deal with waste by turning all unrecyclable waste into electricity rather than dumping it into landfill. It will treat up to 300,000 tonnes of waste each year and will generate 22 megawatts of electricity – powering up to 36,000 homes – that's Aylesbury and Buckingham combined.
- The scheme is forecast to save £150m over the next 30 years by reducing the amount we pay in landfill charges and the income raised from the energy that is produced.
- In the past 12 months we have continued to invest in improving our roads. Last year we spent more than £16m in our ongoing programme of repairs and improvements, bringing the total spent since 2011 to more than £110m. This year a further £15.9m will be spent on surfacing and improvement work on over 50 miles of roads and pavements across the county. In the last financial year we fixed around 17,000 dangerous potholes, identified by our highway inspectors and the public. In addition we have continued to fix street lights, gritted roads and we clear around 150 gullies every day.
- Our zero tolerance approach has reduced fly-tipping in the county by 90%. During 2016 we have continued to build on our success in previous years of catching more criminals in the act and bringing them to justice. The culprits caught last year were ordered to pay a total of £133,000 in fines and costs, beating the previous best of £85,000 set in 2012. That's an average of over £2,500 per week. During 2016 we've invested in more portable hidden cameras which can be moved from

layby to layby – fly-tippers will never know when and where we'll be watching.

This year the County Council has made £71 million from its commercial activities.

Cllr Bond's Report

A draft of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan would be out for public consultation at the end of August/beginning of September. 7,500 new homes to be built in the southern districts. There were 4 new restaurants being built in the town centre as well as flats. The unitary debate had been held off until after the election.

5. Parishioners Views

Vanessa Gaeta commented that she had seen a job advert for a position at the crematorium and queried whether Westerleigh were permitted to do this. The Chair replied that they were but if planning permission was not granted, they would not be in a position to take on employees. Cllr Singleton added that if employment contracts were signed and permission not granted, notice period would have to be paid.

Graham Severn suggested that the PC make representation to ADVC again as the building was not in line with the original plans, especially with regard to parking. Cllr Severn replied that this had already been done. The lights were in contravention of what had been permitted and calor gas tanks had been installed. AVDC have requested to Westerleigh that they cease building but have refused. They cannot operate without a licence issued from the secretary of state.

Libby Rose was in agreement with both Vanessa and Graham's comments and believed the majority of the residents also were. She was furious that building was still going ahead, that the structure was clearly visible and the site had not been landscaped as per the plans. She commented that all appreciate that the PC were doing all they can.

Jo Brooks commented that the streetlamp outside her house had been cut down. The Clerk advised that it would be replaced with a new one shortly.

Dot Toler asked about the removal of the weeds growing at the sides of the roads. The Clerk advised that this would be covered in her report.

6. Date of next Annual Parish Meeting

17 May 2018 7.00pm

Cllr Severn thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 8.04pm.