

Watermead Annual Parish Meeting

Thursday 17 May 2018 at 7.00pm
The Village Hall, Watermead

Attendees: Cllr Severn (Chair), Cllr A Schwab, Cllr I Schwab, Cllr Singleton, Cllr Toler, Cllr Rose, Cllr Gent Noreen Shardlow (Clerk), Michelle Jackson (Assistant Parish Clerk), AVDC & BCC Cllr Netta Glover, AVDC Cllr Ashley Bond plus 4 members of the public

1. Apologies

None – Cllrs A Schwab and Cllr E Rose may be late

2. To agree the minutes of 18 May 2017

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 REPORT 2017-18

In common with most years, the year has had its share of challenges and some high points.

Watermead is a unique place to live and to visit. We welcome visitors from the wider Aylesbury area, who enjoy our open spaces, the landscape and opportunities to view wildlife, nesting birds, well maintained fields and trees. Everyone is welcome.

As Aylesbury grows the pressure on places such as Watermead increases with the cost of removing litter, dog waste and repairing damaged items rising with the increased use. The villagers of Watermead own and pay the costs of the land all we ask is that people respect it, us and the take home their litter, use the dog bins provided and do not damage trees or disturb wildlife, especially nesting birds.

Policing

We have had a high incidence of vandalism this year. Our entrance gate was flattened, signage destroyed, dog bin set alight, the Memorial Garden fence was broken and other fencing cut along with damage to cars, attempted break-ins to sheds and the presence of suspicious people seen late at night trying car door handles. The parish council has recently asked that the Police increase patrols. Incidents must be reported by individuals to 101 or 999 if a crime is happening. If you see drug dealing, vandals, attempted theft please make sure you call 999 immediately. The Police cannot provide cover for areas where they perceive there is little crime. Thankfully, Watermead is still a very safe place to live, but let's keep it that way by reporting crime. The Police do not monitor Facebook.

Events

We have enjoyed a variety of events in the last year. Particularly notable was the Resolution Run held in aid of the Stroke Association, raising over £13,000 for the charity. Runners braved the mud and puddles to run twice round the lakes having enjoyed a disco by Phil Gomm in the Piazza with exercises led by

the team from Reflections to warm them up. The Resolution Run planned for March had to be postponed due to the snow The Resolution Run planned for March had to be postponed due to the snow and again in April due to wet and muddy conditions. It was hoped to arrange a new date in June but due to other commitments the event has had to be cancelled.

May Fair

Sponsored by the Watermead Inn the May Fair was enjoyed by many with strong competition to become Watermead's star baker, sponsored by GK Plumbing. The maypole dancing was accomplished and the May Queen suitably glamorous. Our thanks to Kelvin and Nicky Wong and their team for resurrecting this event for the village.

In the New Year, the Larks by the Lake team led by Karen Collett and her committee, started work to plan this year's event on Sunday 27th May; with sponsors The Watermead Inn, and other local businesses covering the cost of essential items. There will be much on offer including an exemption dog show – all dogs are welcome, with rosettes to fifth place, a Best in Show and Best Puppy in Show trophy and lots of other doggie prizes. The fete includes a funfair, zorbs, craft stalls, food and bar and much more. Do come and enjoy this village event, raising funds for local charities and Watermead amenities.

Christmas Craft Fair and Carol Concert

The Craft Fair on the first Saturday of December and Carol Concert are two established and much loved events where we can meet our neighbours, do a little shopping and enjoy a delicious lunch cooked by Dot Toler. Graham Severn's organisation of the Fair, with Noreen's assistance means it is popular with stallholders and shoppers. The Carol Concert run by Mary Singleton was again a huge success. With better weather and more children than ever the carols were sung with great gusto, following the Christmas Story told in chocolate biscuits this year from Reverend Mark Ackford. The WI provided mince pies, gluten free Christmas cake and sausage rolls, together with the traditional mulled wine to keep us warm. Thanks to everyone, all the work is worthwhile. (In case you were wondering Father Christmas will be joining us again this year – he has the date in his diary).

Village Hall

The village hall continues to be a popular location for parties, classes, clubs and much else, it is a large contributor to life in Watermead. The hall has needed new emergency lighting this year and some maintenance and repairs, but overall remains in excellent condition – we enjoyed the warmth provided by the new boiler, particularly during the very cold weather.

Planning

Planning matters have occupied councillors' minds and time for so long – the crematorium has been rumbling on since 2014 and the Piazza flats application for over a year. The Parish Council has been asked by parishioners to ensure we fight both proposals and we have done so vigorously.

At the time of writing the crematorium planning application was heard at a meeting of AVDC's strategic planning committee in April. Despite presenting a robust and factual case to councillors WPC and the objectors were ignored by councillors who were clearly minded to approve, at more or less any cost, the cost being to our community, sadly. The applicants must now wait to hear whether or not the matter will be called in to central government for a decision.

We are working very hard to ensure that this happens, we have no confidence in the planning authority. We provided every planning reason to refuse the application, however they state they have worked with the applicant for over a year to ensure the plans would be met with approval. We do not believe that this is satisfactory. The PC and many parishioners believe it is pre-determined, and are making constant representations to the Secretary of State, and Rt Hon David Lidington MP to ensure this is clearly understood. The Piazza flats application has met with dismay. The car park is already over full whenever the weather is good and many visit Watermead and the local shops and businesses in the Piazza. The loss of a single parking space would be unacceptable. The proposed blocks are out of keeping with the local vernacular, would be overbearing and cause considerable traffic problems. The Parish Council, with many parishioners, have objected on the strongest planning grounds. At the time of writing Highways has recommended refusal on the basis of increased traffic and lack of parking. We have confirmed we will speak at any planning meeting which will be held if the Officer recommends approval to councillors. We keep a regular check on progress and are in touch with the planning authority. The application has been delayed due to the applicants and fresh plans for parking and a traffic survey. Other planning matters have included the usual mix of extensions, and minor building work to existing properties. Again, the parish council is consulted, but does not make the decision. We are always really pleased to hear the views of residents on all planning matters either at our meetings or to the Parish Clerk. Our job is to represent everyone and it is helpful to know what people think.

Financial

We have not had to increase the Parish Precept (council tax paid to the parish) to cover the legal fees for the crematorium cases. We received our legal costs back, paid by AVDC. This has enabled us to meet the current costs from budgeted funds, and from funds budgeted but not utilised, in previous years. This year we have increased the precept by 2.56% resulting in a Band D house paying £1.49 per week for 2018/19 against £1.46 last year. The PC is confident that it will be able to provide the same level of service in terms of grounds maintenance, repairs and improvements, provision and servicing of bins and meeting administration costs while maintaining a prudent level of reserves. Unexpected costs have included repairs to vandalised assets and land, but we hope this will not be needed next year.

Land

The erosion works to the large lake by the Memorial Garden were completed in the summer with the grass now growing and marginal plants beginning to thrive we are able to enjoy that part of the land without fear of losing the path in the near future.

The Parish Council owns the land immediately adjacent to the kerb stones in the crematorium drive. A new gate has been installed beside the Gatehouse allowing access to our land, which is public amenity land, covered by the Section 106 Agreement in force.

(The land to the north side of the crematorium also belongs to the community and access has now been improved for walkers). It is planned, once the weather improves, to run a series of nature walks in the area, led by Eric Rose, a keen birdwatcher and nature lover, to explore this area. Details will be sent to those on our mailing list and posted on our website and noticeboards.

Please do join a walk this summer in a lovely area of Watermead.

Wildlife

We continue to enjoy the wonderful wildlife especially the birds on and around our lakes. Rising water levels in March and April meant that many of our water birds lost their nests and had to find new locations. The resident swans, who had started making a nest on the bandstand island, nested close to Guillemot Court and the area was cordoned off to deter people and their pets straying too close to it. Sadly the black swan was found dead close to the bandstand on 29 April; possibly attacked by the resident male swan, particularly aggressive during nesting time. We have had up to twenty swans, including last year's cygnets at points during this year.

Allotments

The allotments continue to be an attractive area with a strong community of allotmenters. We look forward to their plant and produce sales and I am sure many of us wish we had the time and inclination to join them! However, they have suffered considerable vandalism and damage this year, which is both unfortunate and despicable. We hope the Police will manage to patrol some more to save this happening in future. It is pointless, costly and disappointing.

WI

The WI continues to have a successful presence in Watermead with lively meetings, talks and outings. We can all certainly recommend their baking, of course!

Over 50s Lunch Club

Mary Singleton worked with Community Impact Bucks to set up an over 50s lunch club. It meets on the second Wednesday of each month at the Watermead Inn. This has proved popular, with fifty members so far. An opportunity to meet new friends and catch up with others, much enjoyed by all. The two course menu is always different, and is very good value.

Thanks

Thank you to everyone who has helped us this year contributing their time and volunteering in the community. Special thanks as well to everyone who has offered support and encouragement, much appreciated and much needed, our community stands together.

Dave Lang and Graham Severn (ably assisted by Sally the Spaniel) who clear litter and spray dog poo, picking up items which could be dangerous to others; without their daily clearance of litter we would not be able to keep Watermead so clean and tidy.

Dot Toler for her lovely lunches at the Craft Fair and much else.

The Village View team, led by editor Mary Singleton, who manage to produce a new and different magazine every single time;

Noreen Shardlow continues to work very hard for the village, and she has worked tirelessly on the crematorium case, taking up countless hours of time. She and Michelle Jackson ensure that the parish is managed effectively, offering excellent service to parishioners at all times. Thank you both.

My councillor colleagues faced many challenges this year from planning

matters, encouraging the cricket club in its efforts to re-form, withstanding a great deal of bullying and unacceptable comment and innuendo around the crematorium. I am pleased to say that we stand resolute, the community has told us what it thinks, and we will work as hard as necessary to bring about the desired outcome if we possibly can. The council works as a team, each councillor generously contributing their own talent and experience, resulting in a professional, highly motivated council which achieves much. I am very proud to be a member of Watermead Parish Council.

Cllr I Schwab wished to thank Cllr Severn for her hard work, knowledge, dedication and persuasiveness in being the driving force behind the PC. She gave thanks on behalf of everyone for steering the PC in the right direction. The comprehensive report given by the Chair shows the amount of work involved over the past year. Thanks were also given to Noreen Shardlow as Parish Clerk.

AYLESBURY VALE DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT 2018

Culture Change Programme

The staff culture change programme has now been successfully completed and every member of staff, with the exception of the three directors, has gone through an assessment process to ensure the right staff are in the right jobs. This has resulted in the loss of around 10% of staff, mainly because digital technology and artificial intelligence are now being deployed to provide up to date information to residents rather than reliance on person to person contact to answer queries.

The savings made have enabled AVDC to develop a balanced budget for the next four years without cutting services.

Income generation

The culture change programme, together with AVDC's digital solutions, has attracted the interest of other local authorities across the country that are similarly suffering from cuts to the government grant and this has created an income stream for the district council to sell ideas to them, generating over £150,000 for AVDC in the last year alone.

Digital Programme

Technology is now being utilised to analyse and answer emails automatically, broaden the amount of information and services available to residents 24/7 via 'My Account', introduce webchat to answer specific questions and develop a 'skill' for Alexa that will enable disadvantaged residents to remain in their homes and enjoy a better quality of life.

Vale Lottery

Now in its third year of operation, the lottery is going from strength to strength and benefiting the many organisations, around 170, that have signed up to the scheme. AVDC also sells the initiative to many other councils across the country.

New Homes Bonus Scheme

This scheme has continued to allow AVDC to pass on some of the funds received from government to local communities, and is one of only a handful of local authorities to do this as others use this funding to shore up their revenue budgets.

Aylesbury Town Centre

The regeneration of the town centre continues apace with the construction of four restaurants and a couple of retail units on the ground floor of a new development with 47 residential units above. AVDC will retain ownership of the ground floor units to produce rental income for the council. The project is on schedule and due for completion later this year. The master plan for the rest of the town centre is being updated to include properties that are not currently in the council's ownership. Details will be made public as soon as possible.

Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan

This has now been submitted to the government inspector. It includes nearly 29,000 new homes across the Vale, 9,000 of which are in respect of the unmet need of authorities in the south of the county. We're obliged to review the plan within two years because government has announced even higher housing numbers for most authorities in the south-east and these will need to be accommodated.

East-West Rail

This railway, together with an Oxford-Cambridge expressway, will open up new housing growth areas that will help to facilitate the increased housing numbers needed. Three corridors have been identified within which the expressway will run: A - the southern option that takes a route from Thame past Aylesbury and out to the Stoke Hammond bypass via the A418, B - the central one that follows the route of east-west rail and a northern one - C - that follows the A421. AVDC's Cabinet view is that a hybrid version of the corridor needs to be properly explored, including the potential of a new junction from the M40 which could combine aspects of routes A and B, and that C is probably the 'least preferred'.

Waste/Recycling Service

Expansion of the depot at Pembroke Road continues on schedule to cater for the future expansion of the Vale's population, providing a modern and efficient service. Investment has been made in 17 new vehicles with much enhanced safety features and economic benefits as well. The new vehicles generate extra capacity and have much bigger 200 litre fuel tanks that have enabled savings as a result of fewer returns to tip their loads.

This has entailed a reorganisation of rounds that, temporarily, has resulted in some extra missed bins whilst crews get to know the nooks and crannies of a new round.

The recent budget took into account the downturn in the value of recycled items and the need to negotiate a new contract from September.

AVDC has provided a schedule of responses to BCC's draft Minerals & Waste Plan including the loss of employment land in general plus a key site with Enterprise Zone status, conflict with VALP, no recognition of neighbourhood plans and flood risk constraints.

Modernising local government

The Secretary of State has issued a 'minded-to' decision to support a single unitary in Bucks (excluding Milton Keynes). The four existing district councils in the county believe that local communities are best served by two smaller

unitary authorities, north and south of the county, and that view has been strongly supported by Parish Councils across the county. Further representations are now invited before a definite decision is made.

Bin collection days may be changing for many households. Aylesbury Vale District Council is making some improvements to its recycling and waste collection services. There are a number of changes that are planned and AVDC will be launching a public information campaign, starting early June and running throughout the summer.

Having recently invested £3.7m in a new state-of-the-art waste vehicle fleet, all recycling, general waste, food and garden waste collection rounds are currently being redesigned to improve capacity and fuel efficiency. Any changes to a customer's bin collection day will not come into effect until early September.

A letter explaining the day changes will be sent to all households across the Vale during mid-August, along with a new bin collection day calendar. The frequency of household collections **will not** change; with recycling and general waste collected on alternate weeks, garden waste collected fortnightly and food recycling collected every week.

The council will do all it can to make sure that customers have all the information they need so that the changes happen as smoothly as possible.

From July any bags could be used in the food recycling bins and not just the biodegradable bags.

BUCKS COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Highways Update: Buckinghamshire County Council Councillors have unanimously agreed to use more than £1million from the Council's reserves to boost investment in the county's roads. It goes into a pot that now totals £5m for an immediate highways repairs programme. The money from the reserves has been combined with recent government grants, money earmarked for road repairs, and Member-devolved budgets to make up the £5m fund. The works will start immediately now the spend has been agreed. It means a total of £20m is being invested in the county's roads by the County Council in 2018-19.

A £2.78 million programme to repair the county's worst pothole 'farms' is to be launched by Buckinghamshire County Council.

The County Council has received £1.78m in Department for Transport repair grants.

However, more money is set to be added from its reserves and from Councillors' repair funds for a 'plane and patch' scheme to resurface stretches of road with multiple defects. Plane and patch teams will target the worst-hit roads across the county, using local knowledge from Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB) local area technicians, with capacity to repair up to nine miles of road. While this programme is active, Transport for Buckinghamshire repair teams will continue with the County's £2m programme repairing individual potholes, and make more use of their high-velocity Jet Patcher, which speeds repair rates.

Modernising Local Gov

Reminder of the Link to BCC's proposal for a single unitary authority: Closes on 25th May. www.futurebucks.co.uk.

Residents can make their views known to james.brokenshire@communities.gsi.gov.uk. Sajid Javid's old email account will be maintained and any email sent to him will be forwarded to James Brokenshire.

AVDC is making a separate response.

There was a very useful meeting on 16th April at the Multiculture Centre in Aylesbury where various parishes debated the pros and cons of going unitary. Once the presentation had been made by the leader of the council the debate seemed to support a single council as opposed to when a similar meeting was held at AVDC where the majority supported two councils.

I have already sent an electronic copy of BCC's proposal.

Aylesbury Garden Town

Buckinghamshire County Council is a joint partner with AVDC, South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) and Bucks and Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) for the Aylesbury Garden Town project which is gaining momentum with key stakeholders towards master-planning a vision for growth in Aylesbury. Aylesbury was awarded Garden Town status in January 2017, which means targeted support from DCLG, DfT and HCA (Homes and Communities Agency) and has attracted a total of £1.4 million to invest in the Garden Town project. An Aylesbury Garden Town website is expected to be launched soon, meanwhile further details on the project can be found at <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/environment/planning/aylesbury-garden-town/>

Expressway

On behalf of England's Economic Heartland's Strategic Transport Forum Martin Tett wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport highlighting his growing concerns over Highways England's approach to engagement on the Oxford to Cambridge expressway. There is frustration over the lack of evidence available to make an informed response on the choice of corridor, and in particular no understanding of what the strategic objectives are for the expressway. We have not been told what the 'weightings' are between the various criteria for the expressway. I am also very concerned at the lack of public consultation about the expressway which will have a big impact on local communities.

Work continues on the scope of our connectivity study, commissioned by Government, which will examine how communities not 'on' the expressway can still benefit from it; this work is a key input into our emerging Transport Strategy.

Part of the evidence base for the Transport Strategy will be a ground-breaking policy scenario modelling tool for the transport system in the corridor, which we have recently commissioned. It will enable Heartland partners to look at 'what if' scenarios stretching out to 2050, and to explore their relative impacts.

Wider strategic infrastructure is of paramount importance.

Therefore, England's Economic Heartland has commissioned Bircham Dyson Bell to identify opportunities to improve the delivery of utility infrastructure.

The Leaders' Board has also been looking at digital infrastructure across the Heartland area, the need for utilities upfront investment and the need to accelerate the Economic Strategy for the Heartlands to help provide a framework for other decisions.

Webcast today

A very interesting debate at County Council this morning – it is worth watching the webcast which will be available for three months. It was about the future of technology and the effect it will have on all of our lives from caring, health, road use.

Checking for bowel cancer for instance – the patient will use a disposable device which will take reading of the gut – once expelled it will be sent to the lab for analysis – the patient won't need to leave home. Care at home – taking pills has been a big problem when one carer doesn't know if their patient has taken the appropriate drugs – the package will send a message to confirm

Technology built into roads and pavements to produce electricity. Driverless cars talking to each other

The Chair thanked Cllr Bond and Cllr Glover for their support over the year.

5. Parishioners Views

Cllr Glover read out an email from Carol Patternoster regarding the crematorium. The PC expressed concern about the conduct of AVDC in general and the development committee meeting in particular. Machinery was on site the very next day after the meeting had taken place.

The AVDC website was out of date which looked inefficient. Cllr Bond to feed back to AVDC. Cllr Bond

Graham Severn commented that on his regular travels around the village, he had heard much support regarding the PC's efforts in opposing the crematorium and the proposed flats. The PC has the backing and support of the community.

Dot Toler seconded Graham Severn's comments on the wonderful work the PC had done regarding the crematorium and hopefully the flats too. As an employee of Watermead Cygnets Preschool she thanked Noreen Shardlow for her support regarding use of the Village Hall. Children were attending from Buckingham Park, Berryfields and Aston Clinton (as older siblings had previously attended) as well as from Watermead. The preschool was able to offer 24 hours of the 30 hour government funding.

A parishioner commented that she believed the proposed flats in the piazza was now a more serious issue than the crematorium. The Chair replied that she believed them to both be equally important and that the PC would do everything it could to oppose both.

It was agreed to delay the Annual Parish Council Meeting to allow the meeting to continue.

The Larks by the Lake event would be running thanks to the committee of volunteers and community effort supported by Kelvin and Nicky Wong from The Watermead Inn. Three people on the committee were from Bierton.

A parishioner asked if it would be possible to increase the number of waste bins around Watermead as many were regularly overflowing. The Chair replied that it was a huge cost to the PC and the more bins provided meant more rubbish being disposed of.

A parishioner queried whether signage could be displayed to prevent access to the island on the small lake. Youths were crossing the temporary barrier onto the island. The Chair replied that there had been signage had unfortunately this had been torn down but the PC would look into replacing.

6. Date of next Annual Parish Meeting

16 May 2019 7.00pm

Cllr Severn thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 8.10pm.

DRAFT