

Watermead Annual Parish Meeting

Thursday 16 May 2019 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. Cllr Rose had advised he may be late. Cllr I Schwab and Cllr A Schwab were stuck in traffic.
2. **To agree the minutes of 17 May 2018**
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 2018-19**

Once again, the year has had its share of challenges and some high points.

Watermead remains a unique place to live and to visit. We welcome visitors to enjoy our open spaces, the landscape and opportunities to view wildlife, nesting birds, well-maintained fields and trees. Everyone is welcome. As with all years, the increase in population of Aylesbury means Watermead is frequently full of visitors in the Balloon Meadow and round the lakes as well as at the Watermead Inn. Inevitably this makes the land more expensive to maintain. Visitors are simply asked to respect our environment, take their litter home, pick up dog poo and don't allow dogs to disturb wildlife. Leave nothing behind when you leave.

Policing

Watermead remains a very safe area in which to live. The Neighbourhood Policing Team has not been much in evidence this year. This is an indication of our failure to report suspicious activity and crimes. The message from Thames Valley Police is clear. If you see a crime taking place call 999; if you are concerned about a possible crime, have some intelligence, including drug dealing, suspicious activity, CCTV footage then call 101. Without information the Police do not know how much policing is actually required. They do not monitor Facebook - please go to them directly.

Events

Larks by the Lake

It is great to be able to report that a thriving Events Committee has now been set up, under the chairmanship of Karen Collett, consisting of a core team of volunteers who gave up considerable time to make the Larks and Film Night events enormous successes last summer. Our sponsors, a number of local companies, didn't need much persuasion from Graham Howse to advertise but would like you to show your appreciation by using their services. Larks by the Lake offered something for everyone with a fairground, stalls, dog show, displays, raffle, games, tombola and a selection of catering. This year's event promises to build on this success, with all the old favourites and much more. Don't miss it on Sunday 26 May. The event raised a lot of money for the charities, as well as providing the funds needed to secure National Lottery funding for the balance of money for the trim trail behind the outdoor gym which has proved very popular - Watermead's first play area for our young residents.

Outdoor Film Night was much enjoyed by all, organised by the Events Committee who worked hard to bring this new event to Watermead. This year's film night is on 14 September. Bring a chair, relax and enjoy the film with excellent catering and bar on site. Glowsticks and sweets, which proved very popular last year, will once again be available to buy.

It's hoped to build on this success this year. Do come along and support the charities and community fund. Thank you to all the organisers. Your work is much appreciated and enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

Photographic Competition

Last year saw the re-launch of the Watermead Photographic Competition. Eric Rose worked with Noreen Shardlow to mount the exhibition of entries, and Ron Adams had the very difficult job of deciding the winners. The overall winner is awarded the Sandra Landy Memorial Trophy, donated in Sandra's memory.

Following the exhibition it was decided to produce a Watermead Calendar featuring the best photographs of Watermead. This proved popular and a calendar will be produced for 2020. The number of calendars is limited so make sure you order yours in good time.

This year's competition details:

Entries are invited in 3 categories:

- Watermead landscape
- Watermead wildlife
- Open category (photographer's choice)

Entries must be delivered to Noreen Shardlow at 11 Ayleswater by **Thursday 19 September**

Exhibition will be on **Saturday 21 September** in the Village Hall from 12.30pm.

Christmas Craft Fair and Carol Concert

The Craft Fair on the first Saturday of December, along with the Carol Concert the following Saturday, remain 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 with this year's stalls already sold out.

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 sad departure of the Reverend Mark Ackford, and the interregnum at Bierton Church, Father Doug Zimmerman from St. Mary's Aylesbury took the service, ably stepping into Mark's shoes. 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 large contributor to life in Watermead. We are very fortunate that a parishioner volunteered and has re-decorated the hall to a very high standard. We are really grateful to him. We will now ensure that nothing is put on the walls - we need to keep it looking its best. We are in the process of applying for grant funding to replace the flooring which is very worn.

Planning

Our disappointment with the decision to allow the crematorium to be built and to open cannot be over-stated. It is a highly visible presence, totally out of keeping with

Watermead and unwanted by far the majority of residents. However, the crematorium has been foisted on us by a planning Authority determined to allow it, despite our ceaseless efforts to stop it, and without any consideration of our views. We must now make certain we hide it from view and continue to enjoy our leisure land and activities. Bierton is now open, in a beautiful secluded setting, more suited to the purpose.

The Piazza flats application has not been decided. We continue to monitor the situation.

Other planning applications have been for extensions, conservatories etc., as would be expected in a place with no spare land for development.

On the wider scale, the Aylesbury Vale Local Plan is nearing completion, but with the new unitary Buckinghamshire Council from 2020, comprising all 4 District Councils and Buckinghamshire County Council, it is difficult to know whether it will be retained. The Oxford-Cambridge Expressway, HS2, East-West Rail are among major projects which will impact the wider area. All are controversial, will result in considerable local disruption, and will be likely to involve much development. Local Authorities are working together with environmental groups and others to mitigate the effect of these but the reality is that local communities have little say.

Financial

Our work is funded from the Parish Precept (tax) which is decided by councillors, having given due regard to budgetary constraints, obtaining best value and prudent management of our funds. For the financial year 2019/20 the Precept is £76,500 which is an increase of 2.23%. For a Band D property, this equates to £79.39 for the year, or £6.52 a month, giving an increase of £1.73 over last year.

In deciding its Precept, the Parish Council was particularly conscious that other elements of the Council Tax such as County and District Councils, Police and Fire Brigade were increasing considerably, and resolved to keep costs as low as possible.

We also took the difficult decision to raise the cost of hiring the village hall by 2.5% which reflects increased costs.

Land

The land beside the crematorium drive has been fenced and hedging planted by volunteers from BBOWT led by Marcus Militello whose knowledge and expertise is welcome. Our thanks to them. Access to this land has been secured by a pedestrian gate; please take care near the river bank when walking in this area.

We hope that another nature walk, led by Eric Rose, to explore the area to the north side of the crematorium will be organised in future. Details will be posted on the All About Watermead Facebook page and on our website.

We haven't managed to find a solution to the cricket field problem. The current 'owners' are unwilling to allow cricket to be played or give the land to the village. Despite spending time to try to find a solution, we have not succeeded. Maybe in the future the situation will be resolved and the field will be returned to us for the purposes of sport and recreation.

Wildlife

One of the pair of nesting swans on the small lake died over Easter, leaving the pen sitting on her 8 eggs. Unfortunately following the death of her mate the pen was bullied by two young male swans on the lake and Tiggywinkles rescued her, with her eggs, which have now hatched. She will not be able to return to Watermead; but we can be confident that she and her cygnets will be found a suitable home. Nature can be cruel.

Our wildlife provide wonderful opportunities for photographers. The images are much enjoyed by all on Facebook. Don't forget to enter your best photographs into September's competition, but please don't disturb the wildlife, particularly nesting

birds, and please keep dogs on leads around nesting areas.

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!

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's over 50s lunch club goes from strength to strength meeting on the second Wednesday of each month at the Watermead Inn. This continues to be popular with fifty members so far. An opportunity to meet new friends and catch up with others and much enjoyed by all. The two-course menu is always different and is very good value.

Speeding

Speeding is a worrying trend, evidenced by data from our portable MVAS machine. We also carry out Sentinel Speed Camera patrols which provide the Police with evidence including the make/model and registration number of the vehicle and speed. All speeders are reported and receive letters from the Police, followed up by a visit from a Police Officer. It is very dangerous to speed on any road, but in Watermead there isn't space. It threatens us, our children, the elderly, our pets and wildlife. Just slow down.

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 which is much appreciated and much needed. Our community continues to stand together. We are grateful to everyone who volunteers to help, in any way.

Special thanks to:

- 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 litterpicks we would not be able to keep Watermead as clean and tidy. It is very encouraging to be able to report that new volunteers have come forward to assist. We provided litter-picking equipment recently to a teenager who was disappointed and shocked when she saw the quantity of litter left over a weekend that she decided to join in the effort.

- 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. Phil Toler has managed to recruit many new advertisers and their support helps us to produce the View. Please support these local businesses.

- Noreen Shardlow continues to work very hard for the village, and 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. Thank you both.

- Karen Collett and the events team who show that with support and volunteer time, much can be achieved. Thank you to everyone on the committee. We are looking forward to this year's Larks by the Lake and the Film Night. It's a pleasure to work with this committee.

Finally, and very importantly, following the Secretary of State's decision to change Buckinghamshire into a Unitary Authority, comprising the four District Councils and Bucks County Council, all Councillors were asked to serve for a further year. Watermead Councillors all agreed to stay on, which is much appreciated. The new Council for Buckinghamshire to be elected next May will be called Buckinghamshire Council and it is hoped that significant synergies will be achieved, resulting in considerable cost saving. We keep a watching brief on this, offering support to officers and looking out for potential opportunities to further Watermead's ability to manage its own affairs.

My councillor colleagues faced challenges this year from planning matters, particularly in pushing very hard for AVDC to listen to parishioners about the crematorium. Despite our huge disappointment with the outcome, nothing more could have been done, the District Council has simply let us down by making an appalling and totally unreasonable planning decision. However, the site is monitored, and any concerns reported immediately to AVDC. However, we remain determined to keep Watermead at its best.

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 and thank my colleagues for their continued efforts and support for the community. Thank you all, very much.

With our very warmest wishes for a lovely summer, and looking forward to seeing many at the summer and Christmas events.

Cllr Adrian Schwab - Vice Chairman

Cllr Schwab expressed his sincere thanks on behalf of all the Cllrs and parishioners to Cllr Severn whose energy, dedication and commitment has been phenomenal. WPC has faced many threats to the community over the past years and he wished to recognise and acknowledge the Chairman's work and leadership.

Bucks County Council Report

Cllr Glover's report

A Unitary Council for Buckinghamshire.

Preparatory work proceeds to prepare for the new council. I hope you got the document I sent last week.

First Shared Service announced: The county and district councils in Buckinghamshire have started the process of sharing legal resources from the autumn, part of the first steps to joining up support services for the new Buckinghamshire Council.

Under the plans, the legal team at Wycombe District Council and joint legal service at Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils, will provide some key elements of the County Council's legal work such as property, contracts and employment work from October 1.

An in-house team at Buckinghamshire County Council will provide its children and adults' services legal work, since this is not replicated at district level, until all legal teams transfer to the new unitary council in April 2020.

Officers from all five district and county councils worked together to develop the plans and will put forward proposals for a fully integrated legal service for the new Council in due course.

Expressway: The consultation on route options will go out to public consultation towards the end of 2019, with the choice of route being made in Spring 2020. This will have implications for the Vale,

Scams: Everyone has a part to play in stopping the scourge of scams and fraud. The more frequently we can share anti scam messages and remind people of scams the more likely we are to help them not to fall victim. If you use social media, there are a number of accounts on Twitter that regularly tweet anti-scam messages which you can use or simply re-tweet, including our own:
https://twitter.com/Bucks_Surreys/ and <https://twitter.com/AgainstScams>

Weed Spraying: A sum of £500,000 has been identified to be targeted at weed treatment across the county in 2019. This will be spent on

Routine weed spraying - A programme of three cycles of routine weed spraying on selected sites will be undertaken by an approved and certified supply chain partner.

Activities will take place across the county. No dates have been set. The programme will be put on the portal.

Armed Forces Day is a national event held every year as a way of saying thank you to our armed forces, including cadets, veterans, reservists and current serving personnel. This year it will be held at a new venue at Wycombe Air Park but will feature the same fun, family-orientated entertainment and attractions as always including air displays, live music, fairground rides, craft stalls and much more. The event is open to all – not just the armed forces.

To book your free tickets visit: www.buckscc.gov.uk/armedforcesday ;

Keep up to date on all our Armed Forces Day news on Facebook and Twitter by following us on @BucksMKAFD Website: www.buckscc.gov.uk/armedforces

Thames Water: Keep up to date by visiting this site:
<file:///D:/Downloads/Thames%20Water%20-%20Spring%202019%20Update.pdf>

HS2. Both AVDC and Bucks CC debated HS2 at their last meetings. Unanimous support to request leaders to write to Secretary of State to ask him to delay work on the project. What started this was the netting of hedges and the destruction of wildlife habitats. Both debates are webcast.

“Whilst supporters of HS2 pretend construction has started, the DfT has confirmed that only the highly destructive enabling works are taking place, years behind schedule. Construction and the release of full funds cannot happen until HS2 Ltd gets notice to proceed, by passing “Management Capability, Affordability of Contracts & Robustness of Revised Business Case” tests. If it is tested impartially on these bases, I believe it will fail all of them and be cancelled, so they should stop causing damage now.”

Sign this petition

For more local HS2 information go
to: <https://hs2inbucksandoxfordshire.commonplace.is/>

Be a Better Biker is back for 2019

The workshops that help bikers take their skills to the next level are back in and around Buckinghamshire this summer.

Be a Better Biker, now in its tenth year, is run jointly by [Thames Vale Advanced Motorcyclists](#) and [Aylesbury Advanced Motorcyclists](#), supported by Buckinghamshire County Council and Bucks Fire and Rescue Service. It aims to improve safety and enjoyment for all bikers.

The workshops cost £20 per biker, and are being held in two venues:

- Thame Fire Station on 12 May, 18 May, 15 June, and 21 September;
- Marlow Fire Station on 8 June and 7 September.
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Buckinghamshire County Council is supporting the course, with a view to reducing the number of bikers killed or injured on the roads. County Councillor Mark Shaw, Cabinet Member for Transportation, says: "With its winding roads and stunning countryside, Buckinghamshire is understandably popular with bikers – particularly when the weather turns nicer and the bikes come out of the garage for the first time in months.

"But in the last three years 119 riders and pillion passengers have been killed or seriously injured in Buckinghamshire. We want to help everyone stay safe on our roads, which is why the County Council is supporting these workshops."

Whether you ride a superbike, classic, or tourer – if you have a full licence and live or ride in Buckinghamshire you're welcome at Be a Better Biker.

About the workshop

The day covers the principles of advanced riding including:

- Manoeuvring
- Overtaking
- Cornering techniques
- On-road assessment with observers, approximately 2 hours
- A review of the on-road sessions, discussing lessons learnt

At the end of the session each candidate will receive a copy of the book *How to Be a Better Rider* published by IAM Roadsmart.

For more information and to book, visit: <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/beabetterbiker>

Cllr Glover offered a £100 contribution to the Watermead Events Committee.

Aylesbury Vale District Council Report 2018 Ashley Bond's report

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.

Thanks were given to Cllr Glover and Cllr Bond for supporting WPC.

5. Parishioners Views

None.

6. Date of next Annual Parish Meeting

21 May 2020 7.00pm

Cllr Severn thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 7.40pm.