**ANNUAL VILLAGE ASSEMBLY**

**HELD AT WATCHFIELD VILLAGE HALL**

**TUESDAY 9TH MAY 2017**

**MINUTES**

**Present:**

**Elaine Ware** - **District Councillor**

**Simon Howell – District Councillor**

**Yvonne Constance – County Councillor**

**Ian Wright –** Governor of **Watchfield Primary School**

**Sue Nodder – Community Led Plan**

**Ryan James– Thames Valley Police**

**Jamie Turnbull- Wing Commander, MoD Shrivenham.**

Representatives of **Watchfield** **Parish Council**

Members of **Village Hall Management Committee**

Watchfield residents

**Item 1: Welcome** – Sue Nodder

Welcome everyone to the 2017 Watchfield Village Assembly

This is not a Parish Council meeting, although it is facilitated by the PC. We thank the Village Hall for the use of the facilities.

We also thank all those who have given up their free time to participate tonight. I hope you will listen to their short presentations and then ask questions.

**Item 2: Ryan James, Thames Valley Police –**

Crime rates - We still have a below average crime rates nationally compared with similar Policing areas and in fact the third lowest crime rate in Thames Valley Police. We are very proud of this as a NH team, however it doesn't just happen by accident!

We work heavily towards crime prevention, pro-active operations, early intervention to get ahead of the curve and of course working closely with our partners and YOU our community. Please do all you can to protect yourself, each other and your property. Your NH team are always on hand to complete surveys, offer advice and products that really work. We will endeavour to carry on many of these drivers to our Policing however do face tough challenges in the future.

Demand - As I've mentioned in the past out demand profile is reasonably consistent in our area ; vulnerability in adult and child social care, domestic assault and general abuse, rural crime, drugs and cross border crime.

Whereas many traditional crime areas have seen good reductions we do have an increase in violent crime, domestic based and more sporadic violence which is difficult to map and find trends with. To this end our number 1 Priority for 2017 will be around all forms of Violent Crime ranging from Harassment and dog bites to Common Assaults right up to the more serious GBH and Aggravated Burglary.

We will be focussed around Organised Crime Groups and the types of offending they can bring to a town and misery to victims.

More Locally - We have seen a huge reduction in Rural Crime and are now definitely in an area that offenders do not want to come to. We have a huge network of rural partners and friends forming our eyes and ears on the ground all looking out for each other. You have a very mobile and flexible NH team ready to drop onto increased crime trends or vulnerabilities and excellent Borderless Policing protocols and relationships coming together regularly on joint operations. Let's make sure we bring this partnership of Spotters to our more urban streets through Neighbourhood Action Groups, Neighbourhood Watch and all other Community Forums as part of our team building Community Resilience. Swindon area is seeing a huge crime increase, particularly around all forms of Burglary which undoubtably will spill over into our area. We are starting to see some increases in West Faringdon (Watchfield, Shrivenham, Bourton). Please report any suspicious activity, however small and keep us and the wider Response Policing family busy in your area!

We have already had successes last year locking up big Drug dealers and disrupting their targeting of vulnerable homes to deal drugs from (Cuckooing). We have used ASB Closure Orders on premises used for drug dealing and will do again as and when we see a pattern of dealing and vulnerable people being targeted. Please be the eyes and ears for your neighbours and report suspicious people who you've not seen before or if you' re worried about strangers coming from addresses. You can do this anonymously if you wish or speak direct to your NH team.

General drug use will always be an issue within our communities however we will continue to work pro-actively in this area as it does affect many other areas of Policing. All of us have a duty to report crime and particularly drug use as it has a devastating effect on all around it. We will work tirelessly with our partners and Licensed Premises who all have a duty to prevent the use of ILLEGAL DRUGS on their premises and must put in measures to prevent it from happening.

Parents and relatives must be 'alive' to the who, what, where, when, why and how of their children's lives - do you know who they are with, what they are doing, when they are doing it and why they are with particular friends?

Please be aware of what contacts they have in their phones, gifts they are coming home with, drunken episodes and poor behaviour. Work closely with the fabulous teachers at Faringdon College and the safeguarding teachers and youth engagement partners. Everyone is here to help and educate but at times will take more stronger action but always in the best interests of the child.

Parking - We all know that this is a problem in Faringdon and has been generated by many factors. There is two hours free parking offered in and around Faringdon, particularly in the Budgons car park - this is a 24 second walk to the centre of Faringdon!

PCSO's HILL and BROWN have started a Problem Solving Analysis of this long term issue in an effort to change perception, provide evidenced responses and future solutions - this will cover many facets from education, warnings and enforcement, to working alongside Town Council strategies in keeping the Town centre 'alive and vibrant' to consultation with the community to own and resolve their own community issues where they can - if thy neighbour is parking inconsiderately or in an illegal manner please speak to thy neighbour. If a business serves a customer who has parked illegally please advise them of where they can park legally.

This is not just a Policing issue and there are very limited Police resources with some challenging priorities ahead of us. We will however be committing some time to enforcement but seek a much longer term approach to this with the community and partners. We are certainly not going to be able to solve it without everyone taking part in finding an acceptable resolution to this.

Police Station - Yes this will close by mid-2018 which will be a sad loss. I have been working extremely hard to keep a Neighbourhood Policing footprint in Faringdon and our huge geographical area. I am pleased to say that we will be co-locating with our colleagues at the Fire Station on Park road as part of a modernisation programme with OCC and TVP. This will be a more compact and bijou location for us but will maintain our ability to be visible and engaged with our local community.

Finally - You would have hopefully seen our recent Newsletter devoted mainly to thanking our community for the huge support they offered us and our wider Policing family following the tragic murder of Tyler Warmington, a young boy aged 5. This has hit us all who work in the community and we know has touched many who live in the area. We are absolutely committed to keeping All of our patch safe and working with partners to help protect everyone from Watchfield, Shrivenham, Faringdon to Kingston Bagpuize, Southmoor, Stamford in the Vale and every village and Hamlet in the middle - We can only do this with your help and are always available to talk through Community Events, by phone, email or through Crimestoppers anonymously. All contacts are on our website.

May I just announce some fantastic news - PC Robert Maris has very quietly won COMMUNITY OFFICER OF THE YEAR. Not just for Oxfordshire but for the whole of Thames Valley Police. We are very proud of him indeed and the work that he has done in the community...often very quietly getting on with difficult investigations, numerous community events, arrests of dangerous criminals and supervising a superb group of PCSO's who serve your community.

I am also thrilled that Andi Cunningham of our very effective Neighbourhood Action Group 1 has won Volunteer of the Year in the Community Awards. This is not just for her partnership work with the Police but also for her huge commitment to her Parish council and other important roles in the community.

We are also very proud of Lou Smith from the Pump House Project in Faringdon being awarded a High Sheriff Award and being put forward for a Queens Award - amazing news and we are glad to support her team with Have your Say meets every Wednesday at the Cake Cafe within the Pump House. You will also find your NH Team at The Place - the new meeting place and forum since the recent closure of the family and children's centre.

You have absolutely shown what a resilient and caring community you are. Thank you from your Neighbourhood Policing Team and Sgt Ryan James.

**Item 3: Elaine Ware and Simon Howell, District Council –**

Once again, the past twelve months have been challenging with a significant amount of time and effort invested in representing the views of the Parishes that we serve on a wide variety of subjects.

Simon continued as Chair of Audit & Governance Committee and the West Area Committee. Elaine continued as a Cabinet Member but with a change of responsibility to Housing, Environmental Health and Grants

Planning - 2016/17 has been another difficult year for our local communities. Planning issues have again been top of the agenda and we continue to do our best in representing the views of our residents. The lack of an adopted Local Plan and a five-year land supply continued to cause significant concerns throughout the Vale. Speculative developers took advantage of the situation and unfortunately many planning applications were reluctantly agreed. The good news was in December when the Local Plan Part 1 was approved and this provided the Vale with a 7.1-year land supply. Local Plan Part 2 is currently being consulted upon. However, no strategic sites have been identified in the Western Vale.

There has been a change in referrals to the Planning Committee. The change was necessary as so many applications were being referred to the committee many of which were minor and were capable of being dealt with under delegated powers. It is now the responsibility of Ward Members to call applications in should it be deemed necessary and only these applications will be considered by the Planning Committee.

S106 negotiations for the Phase 2 strategic site on the Highworth Road took place over many months in order to achieve the right outcomes for Shrivenham. Eventually it was agreed that there will be access from Highworth Road onto the A420 where a roundabout will be constructed.

Of course, housing in Swindon’s New Eastern Villages will have a significant impact on our villages and the Eastern Expansion is now a reality. Following approval last year of Swindon’s Local Plan a total of 8000 dwellings will be built in 8 villages and South Marston will expand. “The Business Hub” now known as Symmetry Park at Gablecross is currently under construction. It will provide new industrial/warehouse facilities over an area of 1,000,000 sq.ft. and is expected to be fully operational in the not too distance future.

There is of course grave concern regarding the impact that all these new homes and Symmetry Park will have on the A420 and representations are being made at the highest level to identify how the impact on this road can be alleviated. Indeed, it is included as a high priority in Oxfordshire Country Council’s Local Transport Plan 4. A major concern is the proposed number of traffic lights from the Oxfordshire boundary to the White Hart Roundabout. The proposal is for six (6) sets. One set will be for the proposed 1,000 car Park and Ride which will be located to the south and close to the Acorn Bridge boundary.

Unitary Authority - Earlier this year a proposal was put forward by Oxfordshire County Council to create a One Oxfordshire Unitary authority. This was then superseded by a combined three authority (Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council) proposal entitled “A new council for a Better Oxfordshire”. This proposal was submitted to the Secretary of State on 23 March. The Secretary of State was expected to make a “minded” decision towards the end of May. Of course, a General Election has since been called and it is not known whether there will be a decision before 2 May when all Government Departments are in Purdah.

Policing - We are pleased to report that the Vale of White Horse continues to be one of the lowest crime areas in the country.

The local Neighbourhood Police Team work closely with the community and indeed rural crime is top of their agenda. The have developed a close working relationship with farmers and gamekeepers to ensure that crimes such as hare coursing are dealt with in a coordinated manner. A number of arrests have been made during the past year.

Elaine is a member of NAG1 (Neighbourhood Action Groups area1) shortly to be renamed Community Resilience Group and if Parish Council’s or residents have any specific issues they would like raised please let her know.

In addition, Matthew Barber (Vale Leader) has been appointed to be the Thames Valley Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner.

Recycling - The Vale has slipped from No.2 to No.4 in the whole of the country for the % of recycling material. The No.1 council is South Oxfordshire with whom the Vale shares its services. It is unfortunate that the Vale has been unable to maintain its level of performance. This has been primarily due to contamination of recycling material which has resulted in whole truckloads of material going to landfill. There has been an improvement since the introduction of NO Black Sacks. The recycling of old textiles and small electrical items has been a great success and residents are encouraged to use these new services. There is likely to be a slight change to the way in which collections are made by Biffa following the use of new vehicles which are due to be in operation from June. Details will be widely publicised.

Appointment of New Chief Executive - David Buckle retired in August and David Hill joined the Council in September. David was CEO of Humberside NHS and has a wealth of previous local government experience.

Conclusion - Along with your local Parish Councillors we work relentlessly for our communities and deal with numerous issues that affect the area.

We attend a variety of meetings and make representation to various Vale Committees, Swindon Borough Council, the County Council and other organisations. We work tirelessly to get our voice heard and our views listened to.

We continue to provide assistance and advice to residents when they have any problems or concerns. We may not advertise what we do on a daily basis but as locals we have our local community at heart and will serve you all as best we can.

**Item 4: Yvonne Constance, County Council –**

This is the end of 4 years as your County Cllr for Shrivenham, Watchfield and 14 other villages. With so much to report that I will list only the main activities for the record. It’s been a most productive time working very closely with Elaine and Simon at the Vale and with Sarah Day as Parish chairman.

The District ‘does’ planning and County ‘does’ potholes and county-wide services, and these parishes are well served by close working between the councils. This reports my activities -

INFRASTRUCTURE :

• proposed and achieved Statement of Common Ground with Swindon Borough to inform, advise, consult fully on all developments on Swindon’s eastern apron. Swindon is to build

8,000 houses, a 1,000 car park-and-ride and a major distribution facility, Symmetry Park (1,000,000sq ft) on A420, with 6 sets of ‘intelligent’ traffic lights, and major remake of the White Hart roundabout as well as Greenbridge (already installed) to improve traffic flow

• chaired Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) working group and achieved new chapter for A420 which has to cope with traffic from 11,000 new houses in approved schemes from Swindon to Oxford

• close attention to developments in Shrivenham: with Elaine, Simon and Sarah ensured new roundabout on A420 for direct access for new Highworth Road houses

HIGHWAYS

• managed communication for traffic during re-surfacing of the Shrivenham by-pass

• supported 20.m.p.h. speed limit in High Street (on evidence from diversion for by-pass)

• supported Elaine’s constant efforts to get the Station Road junctions and traffic calming sorted

• supported delivery (finally) of bus shelters on Faringdon Road; VAS are to come (on order)

• negotiated with Stagecoach to route Bus 66 through Watchfield to serve the village

• ensured regular (and constant) repair potholes, road haunches etc. and High Street signs

• supporting proper management of construction traffic through the village (by Vale planners)

SCHOOLS

• secured free home-to-school transport for 250 pupils in Shrivenham/Watchfield

• won agreement to continue school bus transport for all pupils next year – any use of bus passes to be allocated to older children and NOT to international pupils at Defence Academy

• supported FCC Academy delivery of additional classroom for Shrivenham Primary School

• planned meeting with OCC education officer on 9th May to discuss future provision school places in Shrivenham and Uffington

SERVICES

• secured recycling tip at Stanford-in-the-Vale till 2024

• as chairman county health scrutiny cttee (HOSC) ensure proper links with GWH and socialservices; also questioning District Nursing presence and service to Shrivenham GPs

FUTURE UNITARY COUNCIL – supporting Better Oxfordshire

• with strategic Council of 124 cllrs, each sitting also on 15-20 Area Executive Boards to deliver all services close to residents

Main advantage of Unitary Council will be joined-up decision-making: services are currently provided by separate Councils, with major fault line between development planning at the Vale and infrastructure provided by County: S.106 developer agreements are made too complex and inefficient, causing real frustration in these parts with schemes waiting 2 years to clear funds due.

JOINED –UP DECISIONS by Area Executive Boards (AEBs)

• planning, transport and housing

• environmental services – street cleansing and maintenance under local management

• social care, housing and benefits

• town planning and leisure services

• safeguarding and community safety in partnership working

• services accessed in community hubs in libraries, leisure centres, fire stations, health facilities

• a single county plan in time (after 2031?) joining up housing, jobs and infrastructure (current Local Plans will operate in the relevant district, with cllrs elected in district all entitled to sit on Area Planning Committee) and INNOVATIVE PUBLIC/PRIVATE INVESTMENT FUND to fund £1.7bn gap for Oxfordshire’s planned infrastructure.

FUTURE UNITARY – disadvantages

• who will be the new cllrs with time and skills to make all this happen? If AEBs are to be effective, cllrs must take charge which will be big jobs – mine is full time already!

PROGRESS on BETTER OXFORDSHIR:

March 2017: the proposal submitted to Secretary of State from OCC and South and Vale. Cherwell, West Oxfordshire and Oxford City not participating

May/June 2017: ‘minded –to decision’ expected from SoS, followed by 8 weeks for representations

BUT GENERAL ELECTION now called for 8 June and project will be delayed at least until new SoS is appointed, possibly in June/July. And not clear what effect non- participators will have

**Item 5: Jamie Turnbull, Wing Commander, MoD Shrivenham –**

Thank you for hosting and integrating the military into your community.

Last November it was announced that the college will act as a receiver site, not closing but more than likely increasing in size. No additional housing is likely but integration into the community is more than likely. This however generates problems with the quantity of military personnel on short turnover rates.

Military police no longer present due to financial savings. Guard service is still available but no powers to arrest or blue lights on vehicles. However, the police are using our services and the guards are investigating reported issues in the community**.**

Cost savings are prevalent but delivery of service is still essential. We have started to operate government based training making the college a centre of excellence and therefore increasing revenue.

Financial security of the swimming pool is now assured till hopefully 2028 and use is available for the community. We wish to make the community more aware of the facilities available and will be looking into how to provide the community with this knowledge.

Methodist community support worker has now been employed and we are looking for a support worker to engage in the community.

No intention to sell Folly Field but we are banking land for potential future development. Questions regarding the use of Folly Field by the community whilst it is owned by the MoD but not used will be investigated.

**Item 6: Ruth Holman, Village Hall representative** –

Watchfield Village Hall is run by a voluntary management committee with lots of clubs and activities.

Hall usage includes Gymnastics, Aikido, Pilates , Zumba, Church, Friendly Club, Acorn Club, Yoga and Dog training, Private parties, Elections, children’s parties very popular.

Next event the fete. Events will include Ferret Racing, Sheep dog herding ducks, Majorettes, Magic show, an Aikido display Punch and Judy Live music, Bar, BBQ Refreshments, Ice Cream stalls/ car boot, Tombola, Coconut Shy and cake stall.

**Item 7: Sue Nodder, Chairman Watchfield Parish Council and Community Led Plan –**

This has been the second year with a fully elected Parish Council and I would like to thank all the councillors for their work during the year. Our clerk, Claire Arnold, is still with us and we welcome Tina Brock as our new Responsible Financial Officer since November.

I would also like to thank Thames Valley Police for their help in achieving the successful conviction of Kenton Bush for the Harassment of Watchfield Parish Council resulting in a fine and 2-year restraining order.

It has been another frustrating year dealing with external organisations but we have had some successes.

Two and a half years on from the death of Jayden Nash near the bus stop on the Faringdon Road, we are still waiting for OCC to get their act together to put in posts for vehicle activated signs to be paid for by Watchfield Parish Council. At least these will warn motorists to slow down for crossing children as a formal crossing was refused.

The 4 bus shelters on the Faringdon Road were installed with contributions from the Defence Academy and Watchfield Parish Council, as well as developer S106 money.

A portion of the 66 services are now diverted through Watchfield, 5 a day in either direction (excluding Sundays), which is actually an improvement on the frequency of the withdrawn 65 subsidised route.

We have been able to use some of the developer S106 money for improvements so far which include the new fitness equipment around the recreation ground and the sports wall. There are more pots to spend in the coming year.

Various grants have been successfully applied for and used for seating and picnic benches on the recreation ground and Backlands, a new community noticeboard on the pavilion as well as a store of emergency equipment such as generators, pump and lighting.

Other parish council projects have included the new fencing along the recreation ground boundary, a new pedestrian gate to the rec, renovation of the cemetery, including edging of the paths and filling in the sunken graves, major tree work in the cemetery and Backlands and the clearing and replanting of the recreation ground hedgerow alongside the Community Plan environment group.

There are still outstanding issues to do with road surfacing, hedging, public open space, drainage, etc. on Knapp’s field. Cowan’s, or Meadow View, is now due for completion around summer next year and this should also be when the Parish Council takes over ownership of the packet of public open space at the golf course end. However, the site manager is hoping to open this land for public use later this summer. There are also ongoing issues with the Hills development to do with tree felling and hedge maintenance. We did manage to get one carriageway resurfaced along Major’s Road and there should be restoration of the remaining surface when Meadow View is completed. Please do continue to report any road defects through FixMyStreet. The Linden Homes application on the golf course for 136 houses and a country park was withdrawn again and the land is not identified as a development site in the new Local Plan. This does not mean it has gone away forever but there should be less chance of success.

A group of 4 villages including Watchfield now have their own speed radar gun to monitor traffic speed but we need some more volunteers to train with the police. This takes around 30 minutes and could be arranged locally so please do sign up if you can spare half an hour now and then to suit you.

We remain concerned about continual cuts and moves to push parish councils into taking more responsibility for services with no support.

Community Led Plan - We are very happy to be working alongside Watchfield Community Plan to enable us to provide the evidence required by the Vale to spend some of the S106 money, nominally allocated to Watchfield from developments. Toby, the Community Plan chairman has moved away from Watchfield but we still have a small core of volunteers.

The Community Plan has assisted with the hedgerow replanting and wildflower bank near the recreation ground, as well as successfully applying for small tree package which will be planted around the village. Please feel free to weed along the bank whenever you feel like it! There are also projects underway to monitor the local water sources and improve wildlife habitats.

The Public Works of Art officer for the Vale was been working with the Community Plan group to run workshops for the stone carver and map maker appointed to produce new works of art for Watchfield. Some information about these is available in the lobby and all designs produced during the stone carving workshops in the village hall, root and branch and at the school will be included in the final designs for stone benches and way markers.

Map making workshops for a new Watchfield map have been held at Root and Branch and Defence Academy today and the artist will visit the school tomorrow and there are 2 workshops towards the end of May at the village Hall. Please come along to add your ideas to the map – it could relate to your house or road, or an incident in the village or a memory you have of the area. No artistic ability required and any material or photos you bring along can be scanned on the day and used to inform the map.

The sports and young persons’ group have helped with finding out the types of equipment most wanted by the residents and identifying suppliers. This has resulted in the choice of fitness equipment and sports wall.

If you feel you would like to help with any aspect of the Community Plan, just let me know.

It only remains for me to thank all our speakers and you for coming along. As ever, we are grateful for the support and community spirit of the vast majority of residents. Thank you, once again.

Meeting closed 21:12hrs

Claire Arnold, Clerk Watchfield Parish Council

09/05/17