**ANNUAL VILLAGE ASSEMBLY**

**HELD AT WATCHFIELD VILLAGE HALL**

**TUESDAY 8TH MAY 2018**

**MINUTES**

**Present:**

**John Quinn – Watchfield Primary School**

**Sue Nodder – Watchfield Parish Council**

**Tom Pryor – Thames Valley Police**

**Ruth Holman – Watchfield Village Hall and Over 50’s Club.**

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

Members of **Village Hall Management Committee**

Watchfield residents

**Apologies**:

County Cllr Yvonne Constance and District Cllrs Elaine Ware and Simon Howell send their apologies but leader Matt Barber steps down by end of May to take up full-time position as Deputy Police Commissioner Thames Valley after 7 successful years as Leader VWHDC, election for a new leader has fallen on tonight’s Annual Assembly.

Reports to be read by Cllr Sue Nodder.

**Item 1: Welcome** – Sue Nodder

Welcome everyone to the 2018 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 hall free of charge.

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: Tom Pryor, Thames Valley Police –**

TVP has gone through a large re-organisation where efficiency is key. Abuse Victims, Drug use, dwelling burglaries and rural crime are current priorities, Parking issues will be tackled when seen but are not a priority. There are discussions regarding the Police building staying in Faringdon and we are strongly pushing for the station to remain in Faringdon. There have been issues with new homes in Watchfield being redirected to Swindon Police, please do state that you are TVP not Swindon and apologies for the redirection.

**Item 3: John Quinn, Watchfield Primary School-**

Report available on request.

A large number of children from Shrivenham are now coming over here and therefore we are hoping that the new Shrivenham School is built fairly soon.

There is no longer a grant available from the MoD regarding teaching English as a second language, however we are still teaching this but swallowing up costs.

**Item 4: County Cllr Yvonne Constance –**

**(Report read by Cllr Sue Nodder)**

OXFORDSGIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

• BUDGET for 2019/10 has been increased by 5.99% to include 3% ring-fenced increase for social care - children and adults.

• SOCIAL CARE: Care worker recruitment drive has already attracted more applicants in 5 months as in past 2 years. OCC currently has about 14,200 working in adult social care, but Oxfordshire’s ageing population is growing at twice the national average.

• POTHOLES: As Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport I have raised potholes to the top of the OCC agenda. Gov has provided £2.8 million extra for repairs making about £16 million for road repairs this year. But snow, and ice and salt have damaged our roads beyond expectations – reports to Fix My Street are now running between 7,000 to 8,000 per month, up from the average of 2,000 per month, so we have brought in 2 extra repair teams and an additional Dragon Patcher and aim to fix about 35,000 potholes this year. I hope you have noticed there are workmen repairing potholes in our area already. But we know it will need £150 million to resurface our roads, and I am open to all suggestions about where to find this money!

• HGVs: throughout the county are working with Trading Standards to police the scourge of HGVs ignoring weight restrictions on rural roads and bridges. Since Feb 2016 there have been 100 prosecutions (resulting in £55792 in fines) with 57 more cases under active investigation. In total 550 warning letters have been issued following reports from the public; 157 seen by patrolling Trading Standard officers and 460 vehicles recorded by the ABPR cameras at Newbridge.

• GROWTH DEAL: OCC initiated a deal with Gov for £215 million over 5 years for infrastructure, which includes £60 million for affordable housing, likely to be for key-worker housing close to Oxford to counter the problem that Oxford City housing is most expensive outside London. This is a ground-breaking deal for a stream of significant funds to provide roads to deliver 100,000 houses in the county by 2031. The deal required agreement from all four District Councils and the City, and will enable OCC to plan big infrastructure improvements (from the Ox.Infrastructure Schedule) and is a wholly new way to fund development in a county without a Unitary authority.

• UNITARY COUNCIL: the plan agreed by all councils last year for a Unitary authority is still on the desk of the SoS, and we watch developments in Northamptonshire with great interest. But meanwhile the gain for major infrastructure funding has been secured through the successful Growth Deal.

• EAST WEST RAILWAY: OCC has been a lead council in the consortium which has secured £1billion Gov funding (November 2017) to extend the East/West railway from Bicester to Bletchley (Milton Keynes). Following this modal, a new consortium will now be formed by the councils east of Bletchley to extend the railway to Bedford and Cambridge.

• OXFORD EXPRESSWAY: I chair an advisory group on the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway which aims to ‘open’ England’s economic heartland with a science knowledge spine from Cambridge to Oxford with a new science university at Milton Keynes, as proposed by the National Infrastructure Commission. There are 3 possible ‘corridors’ to route this road through Oxfordshire, which makes us the most affected by this development. We cannot yet indicate a preferred corridor, as the technical assessments are not yet available. We have responded to Highways England that the Expressway must NOT use the section of A34 through central Oxfordshire and must not seek to use A34 where it serves as a local road past Oxford City. It must also be developed separately from local planned enhancements like the Culham river crossing. VWHDC prefers a route south of Abingdon; SODC prefers a route north of Oxford and they have called for a public enquiry.

• THAMES WATER’s RESERVOIR: OCC has called for more detail about TW’s estimates of population growth in the county, aware that TW sees this as a regional facility without making clear what other possible sites have been assessed across the South East region. We have asked also how much of the water will be sold to other water companies and called (again) for TW to speed up their programme of leakage reduction to ‘delay the need for a reservoir as long as possible.

• ENVIRONMENT: OCC is planning first Zero Emission Zone in the world for centre of Oxford by 2020; is initiating many improvements for cyclists in and around Oxford City; and has consulted on how to increase recycling aware that nearly 60% of what still goes to waste generating plant is recyclable. We must do better with bottles . . .and all plastics!

Questions will be emailed to Cllr Yvonne Constance.

**Item 5: VWHDC Cllrs Elaine Ware and Simon Howell –**

**(Report read by Cllr Sue Nodder)**

Another busy year to report on representing the 12 Parishes of the ward and covering a wide range of views of the Parishes that we serve.

Simon continued as Chair of Audit & Governance Committee and the

Faringdon Area Grants Committee. Elaine continued as a Cabinet Member but with an expanded area of responsibility for Housing and Environment, including waste, licensing, community safety and technical services.

Planning

Planning issues have again been top of the agenda and we continue to do our best in representing the views of residents across the 12 Parishes.

The Local Plan is now in place and has an 8.4-year land supply in this area.

Local Plan Part 2 was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination inspection on 23 February. David Reed has been nominated by the Planning Inspectorate to independently examine the Plan and we await confirmation of the dates and venue when this will take place. No strategic sites have been identified in the Western Vale.

NPPF – The revised National Planning Policy Framework has been published and is currently being consulted on. The consultation deadline is 10 May.

Appeals Five appeals in the Ward were registered to be considered by the Planning Inspectorate. Four of these have been dismissed, including the Gypsy and Traveller site on Compton Road, Shrivenham. The appeal for the Badbury Hill (Great Coxwell) site will be held in due course.

Legal & General – Shrivenham residents were invited to attend a public exhibition held on Tuesday 20 February from 1500hrs to 1900hrs. The exhibition gave residents the opportunity to discuss the type and design of dwellings with representatives from the company. Initially L & G propose to build 240 homes on the Phase 1 allocated site which is located directly behind the Blue Cedar development to the east of Highworth Road. This Phase also includes land for a new primary school. It is anticipated that a Reserved Matters application will be submitted within the next couple of weeks. The Phase 2 Reserved Matters application for 265 dwellings is expected to be submitted before the end of this year. Concerns were expressed regarding access to the Phase 1 site during construction and L & G indicated that they may build a temporary access road from the A420. This is to be confirmed with the County Council.

Bovis – Townsend Road – Bovis has submitted a revised Reserved Matters application which addresses many issues that have been raised by the Parish Council and local residents. The consultation for the revised plan ended on 12 April.

Gladman – Townsend Road – Phase 2 – We wrote to Gladman explaining that the Vale has more than a five-year land supply and that the site is not included in either Local Plan Part 1 or in the draft Local Plan Part 2 which clearly states that there will be no additional allocated sites in the western vale. Needless to say, there has been no acknowledgement of receipt of our letter which was sent by both Email and post.

Taylor Wimpey - Longcot Road – The Vale Enforcement Team and OCC Highways are dealing with numerous issues and breaches of planning conditions that have been raised by us, as well as the Parish Council and local residents.

The application for additional dwellings was considered by the Vale Planning Committee on Wednesday 7 March and permission granted. There will now be 63 dwellings rather than the 59 that were approved at appeal.

Land South of Steeds Farm Gt. Coxwell – An Outline application for a further 125 dwellings have been submitted to the Vale. This application is in addition to the 200 that are already being constructed on part of this strategic site. Concerns have been raised by both Gt. Coxwell Parish Council and Faringdon Town Council as well as local residents. The deadline for comments passed on 15 March and the decision target date is scheduled for 2 May 2018. This application will be considered by the full Planning Committee.

Growth Deal – The Chancellor announced funding of £215m over a five-year period for the County in his November 2017 budget. All six Oxfordshire Councils have now approved the deal. The deal would also see the establishment of a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP) for the County to improve a joined-up approach to planning. The Vale has made it clear that the plan must not allocate housing sites and will put no pressure on the Vale before 2031. The Government formally signed off the Growth Deal early April. The next stage will be to create the Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP) by 31 July 2018 for the County to improve a joined-up approach to planning. Further consultation on this plan will follow in due course.

Swindon Eastern Villages - The impact of the start of the new “Eastern Villages” in Swindon are starting to take shape and will have a significant impact on our villages. A total of 8000 dwellings will be built in 8 villages and South Marston will expand. Currently 2 main developments are in the pipeline – Rowborough (2380) and Great Stall (1800). A new application is to be considered by SBC for 370 homes on the Redland Airfield Site.

Unitary Authority

A year ago, a proposal for a new Unitary Authority was submitted to Central Government. This was 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”. The Vale has written to Sajid Javid renewing the call for a Unitary Council. Unitary Councils have been in the news recently with both Dorset and Buckinghamshire receiving approval for reorganisation and Northamptonshire is expected to follow.

We are awaiting further information

Recycling

The Vale has slipped from No.2 to No.4 in the whole of the country for the % of recycling material. 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.

There has been an improvement since the introduction of NO Black Sacks.

Recent efforts have included a campaign to reduce the disposal of food in grey bins and to correctly use the food waste buckets.

Fly Tipping

The Vale has successfully prosecuted several individuals for fly-tipping. The latest was for dumping of waste in the same place on three different occasions and caught on camera. The offender was fined and made to pay costs and compensation which amounted to over £1500.

Public Realm Team

Included in the Vale’s budget is an allocation of £250,000 per annum over the next three years for delivering improvements throughout the district. The project is in its initial stages and more details will be published shortly.

Grants

The following dates have been confirmed for grant applications:

Capital and New Homes Bonus – Round one – 25 April-6 June Round two (budget permitting) 11 September-22 October

Festival Grants – 1 April-28 February 2019

The Grants Team are always pleased to offer advice and contact details are on the Vale website. In addition, the team are holding advice sessions on 18 April in Uffington and 24 April in Letcombe Regis. For more information call 01235 422103. Booking is essential.

Appointment of New Chief Executive

Mark Stone was recently appointed as new Chief Executive after a period in the role as an interim measure.

(Breaking News) Appointment of New Leader of the Council

Matthew Barber has announced his intention to stand down as Leader of the Vale of White Horse Council. A new Leader will be appointed at the Annual Meeting on 16th May. Prior to this a new Conservative Group leader will be appointed on 8th May.

Conclusion

Along with your local Parish Councillors we work tirelessly 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 hard to get our voice heard and our views listened to.

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

All questions will be emailed to the District Councillors.

**Item 6: Watchfield Parish Council**

The Parish Council has a full complement of 8 members including 2 new co-opted councillors – Ed Beales and Michael Gale - following the resignations of Nigel Bayston and Mark Douglas. I would remind residents that Parish Councillors are not paid for their roles, nor do they receive a reduction in their council tax bills! I would like to thank all the councillors for their work during the year in carrying out the parish responsibilities, including the recreation ground, sports pavilion, cemetery, allotments, playground, estates, communications and finances. We have 2 paid proper officers of the council who do not vote on matters but ensure the council is run correctly. Our clerk, Claire Arnold, is still with us, as is Tina Brock, our Responsible Financial Officer.

It has been another frustrating year dealing with external organisations but we have had some successes. We now have Vehicle Activated Signs on the Faringdon Road to warn of pedestrians crossing. These signs, at least, will warn motorists to slow down for children crossing as a formal crossing point was refused. These signs also have data loggers which record the time and speed of all vehicles to build up a pattern of use and speed.

The 66 bus service continues to be diverted through Watchfield, 5 times a day in either direction (excluding Sundays). We are still battling with OCC to make them enforce the planning conditions for the Knapp’s development along Major’s Road which should have seen a dedicated bus stop outside for the new residents as well as footpath improvements.

We have run into unrealistic stipulations from the Vale District Council for the application of S106 money for the village – this is money for village projects secured as part of the major developments. We are negotiating for the money for improving the surfacing under the play equipment, new play equipment, fencing in the younger children’s area, improving the recreation ground pitch surface, improvements to the pavilion, fencing the ground to safeguard the hedgerow, tennis provision, petanque lanes, defibrillators, and improvements to the green spaces, seating and footpaths around the village.

This year the Telephone box and benches around the village have been refurbished, as well as the Backlands kissing gates and cemetery gates. The fencing along the back of main allotment site has also been replaced. Ironwork railings are on order to replace rotted posts alongside cemetery, Oak Road and Chapel Hill and a staggered gateway is to be installed along the footpath adjacent to the recreation ground to prevent vehicular access beyond the allotments entrance. We contract a regular litter collector to keep our areas clean and empty the bins on parish land.

The Public Works of Art are nearly complete and there are pictures available of the progress. The hold up has been with getting the groundworks in place for the installations and the licences required for the highways locations. It now seems the bases will be installed in June and the works shortly afterwards.

I hope you will have noticed the Silent Soldier adjacent to the village war memorial to commemorate the centenary of the end of the Great War and to remember those who did not come home. There will be a special service on November 11th at St Thomas’ with reference to those named on our village memorial.

There are still outstanding issues to do with road surfacing, hedging, drainage, fly-tipping, vandalism and Anti-Social Behaviour around the village. We do not have jurisdiction or enforcement capabilities for these things but can act on your behalf to pressurise those who do. Please do continue to report any street problems through FixMyStreet.

We continue to carry out Community Speedwatch in 3 key areas of the village and have highlighted sites and times for targeted action by police.

We asked for a 3% rise in our portion of the council tax this year in line with other councils’ rises and predicted increases in service costs. This equates to a £1.11 increase per annum for a Band D property. We remain concerned about continual cuts and moves to push parish councils into taking more responsibility for services with no support.

Everyone is welcome to any parish council meeting – usually the third Tuesday of the month (except August) at 7.30pm at Watchfield Village Hall. I remind you that there will be Parish Council elections in May 2019 and any resident can stand. There will be more information closer to the time or do contact the Clerk for details.

Please do continue to dial 101 for suspicious activity.

Resident would like to thank the work carried out by the PC.

**Item 7: Watchfield Community Plan, Sue Nodder –**

The environment group’s main push in the last year was to instigate and run the first Watchfield Open Gardens which saw 14 gardens open to visitors both local and from further afield. The majority of the money raised has purchased summer flowering bulbs to surround the new public works of art. Spring flowering bulbs will also be planted this autumn.

Other groups are assisting the parish council with S106 applications and projects.

**Item 8: Watchfield over 50s coffee group, Elaine Bayston**

**(Report read by Sue Nodder)**

The Over 50s coffee group started in 1999 in this village hall. We now meet every Thursday 2-3.30pm at the Community Room, Maidens Close. We meet for company, play bingo and have occasional trips out to garden centres and of course our annual Christmas lunch. Tea ,coffee, cakes & biscuits are served free of charge each week. Our aim is to get more people from the village to come to this friendly group.

Christmas Eve Carols

This annual event under the tree at the bottom of the High Street has been running for nearly 25years. It started with just a few villagers and has grown to over 300 people attending now. This event is a great way to start the Christmas season for the community. Singing carols accompanied by local players and more recently help by Pegasus Band. Local children usually sing Away in a Manger and Father Christmas hands out sweets to them during his busy schedule. People as far as Witney, Abingdon & Swindon now come to this annual event. A collection is taken which benefits the local organisations. Our aim is to keep this traditional event running each year & maybe grow it.

**Item 9: Watchfield Village Hall and Acorn Club, Ruth Holman –**

The Village Hall is now a stand alone registered charity,

All funding comes from fundraising such as the summer fete (2nd June), Christmas Fayre, Cream Teas, Bingo nights. We are currently seeking grants and crowd funding to help towards the costs of the extension that has been approved.

We have a childrens group, slimming world, yoga and pilates and lots of childrens parties booked. The post office will be a permanent feature.

Acorn Club meet once a month on the third Tuesday of every month for those that are retired. We have around 20 member and a two-course meal provided with entertainment in the afternoon, the cost is £6.00. New helpers are always welcomed!

The Church service is held at 9am in the morning and any suggestions for a special service are welcomed.

**Sue Nodder -**

It only remains for me to thank all our speakers and you all 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: 20:35