

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Padbury Parish Council
held on Tuesday 19th April 2016 in the Pavilion, Springfields at 7:00 pm**

Present:

Cllr K. Roberts, Chairman
Cllr M. Bailey
Cllr S. Dickens
Cllr. M. Long
Cllr F. Morris
Cllr V. Murray
Cllr. M. Williamson

Also Present: Parish Clerk Mrs D. O'Brien; District Cllr L. Monger; 4 residents

1. Welcome and Introduction

Cllr Roberts welcomed those present.

2. Apologies for absence – apologies were noted from County Cllr Chilver & District Councillor Renshell

3. Minutes

Those present **RESOLVED** to confirm the minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on Tuesday 14th April 2015.

4. Chairman's report (Cllr Ken Roberts)

The aim of this report (and indeed this meeting) is to update the residents of Padbury on developments within the community, and in particular to provide an account of the activities of their Parish Council, over the past year. I will also use this opportunity to signpost possible activities in the coming year.

The report covers the whole year, although I have only been Chairman since October 2015, following the resignation of David McGahey when he moved to Devon. I'd like to express my gratitude to him in leaving the Parish Council in such good order when I was elected to office. As I will explain, the workload of the Parish Council continues to be heavy, and is highly likely to increase in the short to mid-term.

Planning

We have been actively involved in the consultation process towards the Vale of Aylesbury Plan, which is now due to be made next year. This process has involved attendance at many meetings at various levels, and scrutinising and commenting on the Plan and its supporting evidence as it has developed. This is important, as it will govern the shape of the Vale for many years to come. The consultation process continues this summer, and you can be assured that the Parish Council will continue to be engaged, and I would encourage residents of Padbury to do the same, especially as it is likely that we can expect to see numbers and locations of housing uplift allocated under the Plan to be released.

Whilst we have designated Padbury as a 'Neighbourhood Area', we have made no realistic progress in making a Neighbourhood Plan, which is likely to put us at a disadvantage when defending the village against inappropriate development in the future. The Parish Council cannot do this on our own, and I'd urge residents to become engaged with this process.

We have, of course, had the usual large numbers of planning applications within the village, ranging from relatively simple alterations to existing houses to (for a village of this size) significant developments. Many residents have been active in raising objections to many of these, and their engagement has been very reassuring.

Devolution

Over recent months we have been engaged with Buckinghamshire County Council in negotiating our involvement in devolved grass and hedge cutting services. This has taken a lot of effort to achieve, but we now have a contract with Lynch Garden Services to provide these activities on our behalf, and the standard achieved so far has been impressive. Financial support from BCC to cover these services will decrease year on year, and we have made provision for this in our budget.

It is likely that further services may be considered appropriate for devolution in the future.

Speed Monitoring

Speeding through the village continues to be a problem. The speed detection device owned by the Parish Council has been used at a number of locations on rotation. The most significant village initiative to try to reduce this problem is the Speedwatch programme. This is carried out by a number of volunteers, who were (until very recently) led by Debbie Gibbs who started this initiative when she was a Parish Councillor, and we are very grateful for their efforts. She has had to give this up given a perceived conflict with her role as a Magistrate. As a result, Padbury Speedwatch is currently suspended. We are always looking for Speedwatch volunteers and would now urge someone to put themselves forward to head up this important function. It would be a great pity (especially given the ongoing concerns with regards to the obvious hazards posed by speeding) if this effort is unable to continue.

Playing Fields and Play Area

The playing fields and pavilion continue to be regularly used by a number of village related sports clubs, and also to host a range of social and other events such as Play around the Parishes. Henry Paxton's efforts as groundsman are considerable and effective, for which many thanks. Regrettably, there have been a number of occurrences of vandalism on site in recent months resulting in costly damage, and a number of measures have been put in place to attempt to prevent recurrences. This includes the installation of CCTV. The Parish Council will press the Police to prosecute those who can be proven to be involved with this unacceptable anti-social behaviour.

The Play Area on Main Street is well-used, and the Parish Council puts a lot of effort in to ensuring that it is a safe and attractive environment.

Millennium Wood

The Parish Council remains responsible for the maintenance and management of this village asset. A very successful work party took place in November to coppice part of the wood, and we are very grateful for all those who gave up their time to assist. Further sessions are likely later this year.

Highways Issues

Residents will be aware of the considerable amount of repairs and improvements to the roads (particularly along the A413 and around Springfields) last autumn. However, a number of the smaller roads still have many potholes. Unfortunately, funding for all non-statutory work by BCC has been suspended, and this has impacted greatly on this type of repair. Nevertheless, we continue to press for our 'share' of repairs at every opportunity.

A cycleway is to be built connecting Buckingham to Winslow and will pass through the top of the village along the A413. Residents can expect disruption during its construction over the next few months.

We continue to expend much effort in repairing and replacing street lights throughout the village.

War Memorial

As a result of the research carried out by members of the Padbury Sick Benefit Society into the Padbury men who were involved in the First World War, it was discovered that a name was missing from the village war memorial. The name of 123710 Private William Thomas Grimsley Royal Army Medical Corps was therefore added to the memorial in time for Remembrance Sunday 2015.

Crime and Anti-social Behaviour

There have been a number of spates of break-ins and burglaries (especially related to cars and outbuildings) over the past year. The Police are aware, but we would urge continuing vigilance and the taking of appropriate precautions.

I have already mentioned vandalism in the village, but the age-old problem of dog fouling continues. This is really inexcusable given the provision of disposal bins (the emptying of which has to be paid for) and as a basic requirement of dog care. It is at best disrespectful of fellow villagers and at worst a hazard to health especially for children. It has already proved to be a problem for our grass-cutting contractor. Those continuing to act in this way need to be reminded that dog fouling attracts a fine of up to £1 000.

Finances

A full report from our Treasurer follows, and I would not dream of stealing her thunder on this. However, the headlines are that the Parish Council financial position remains healthy. It will be noted that we have had to raise the precept as a prudent measure to ensure that we will be able to support those services that have been (and those that might be) devolved to the Parish Council.

Conclusion

It has been another busy year for the Parish Council, and I am extremely grateful for all that my fellow Councillors have done (including those who have stood-down over recent months) to help make Padbury such an attractive and pleasant place to live in. They do so in many different ways, and their efforts are often overlooked, but not by me.

I am also very grateful to our Parish Clerk, who not only acts as our Treasurer but who also has the unenviable task of keeping us as a Council on the straight and narrow as our 'Proper Officer' and therefore keeping us out of trouble. Additionally this year, she has set up a Parish Council website and pursued a number of other initiatives to ensure our activities are afforded the necessary transparency.

On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to record my thanks to all those residents who have attended Parish Council meetings over the past year, and for all those who give up their time and talents over the whole range of village activities. We will hear about some of those a little later.

5. Treasurer's report (Parish Clerk/RFO Mrs D. O'Brien)

At 31st March 2016 Padbury Parish Council's bank accounts totalled £25,300.73:

- o £8,791.44 in the Santander Savings Account in respect of the Springfield Sport Ground legacy
- o £971.91 in the Barclays Bank Community Current Account (£20 cheque still to clear so available balance is £951.91)
- o £11,009.06 in the Barclays Business Reserve Account
- o £3,025 in the Barclays Millennium Wood account comprised of monthly donations towards the upkeep of the wood
- o £1,503.32 in the Barclays Play Area Account (which is money raised to be utilised for on-going maintenance of the play area on Main St including annual inspections).

Income received from Pump advertising was £924, contributing to the total printing costs of £1,429.53. In 2016/17 advertising rates will increase slightly (+£2) to help offset the cost of printing.

A VAT repayment of £1,970.33 is due with £657.75 claimed from 2014/15 and received in 2015/16.

Padbury Youth and Tennis Clubs have paid their fees in full, with the Football Club still owing for March 2016. In addition income of £217 has been generated by hiring out the Pavilion.

£921 was received from Western Power as reimbursement for a light they removed in error and this was used to replace one of three heritage lights installed.

An insurance claim had to be made following the damage to the marquee and this amounted to £5,598.41.

The total expenditure for the Parish Council in 2015/16 was £25,910.64, inclusive of VAT, and including £4,805.70 for repairs from the marquee damage and a grant refund to the marquee committee. Normal Council expenditure totalled £19,134.61 including £2,757 for three replacement heritage lights. We managed to negotiate more favourable terms for Parish Council insurance, reducing the premium by some £1,135. However, this is likely to increase in the year ahead due to making a claim. Electricity costs have increased as mentioned last year with street lighting costing £300 more and the Pavilion electricity costing an additional £265. Repairs due to vandalism totalled £355 and we also replaced a light fixture from the Sportsfield fund costing £458.00

After careful consideration, the precept for 2016/17 has been increased to £17,000 which is an increase of £0.43 per month for tax band D householders. This has been done for two reasons. Increased funds need to be set aside every year to cover replacement light fixtures as the stock in Padbury ages. In addition, Bucks CC has devolved grass cutting services to the parish, and whilst there will be small grants from BCC for the first 3 years, these will not fully cover the cost (£670 shortfall) and there will be no grant in year 4 and beyond. It is anticipated however that the improvement in the village appearance will justify this.

6. Padbury C of E School Governor's report (Mrs J. Bursell)

Mrs Bursell was appointed to the Board of Governors in November 2015. The school is in good health with 80 children on the roll which can increase to 90 in December and in theory increase by 15 per year thereafter. The school prefers to cap out at 100.

The school's change to 'voluntary status' has made little change. The new school hall should be ready for the Sept 2016 term and this will give the extra space to allow for 100 pupils. It will be large enough to accommodate assemblies, lunches etc. The existing hall will become a classroom.

The staff are excellent and the school is currently monitoring requirements for Academy status. There will be a presentation by the Diocese in conjunction with Bucks CC in this regard, but the school wants to remain a village Church school with autonomy. It is likely that a multi-academy trust may form with other small Church schools.

7. Parochial Church Council (PCC) report (Mr. P. Cresswell)

Church attendance is fairly stable numbering over 30. Finances are at a good level thanks to fundraising and collections and the PCC is keeping its head above water. The PCC now has a website for the Church www.padburychurch.co.uk which is designed to help keep communications open. The Clergy has a strong relationship with the school. Unfortunately the fabric of the Church is a concern as the roof is leaking. A grant has been received from the 'Listed Places of Worship Fund' and repairs commence in May. The Churchyard was mentioned favourably in the Best Kept Village judging. The new front wall is complete – this was paid for by donors with nameplates. The PCC is grateful for the annual grant from the Parish Council towards the churchyard maintenance – a new mower will be purchased this year. Volunteer gardeners are always sought. The allotments (which the Church manages) are thriving. Water is supplied by the landowner at the proposed Bloor development and the Church would like the water supply to continue.

8. Padbury Pre-school report (Mrs C. McHenry)

Padbury Pre-school has now been operating for 7 years and during this past academic and financial year we have continued to develop and improve as an independent provider of the highest level of cost effective quality childcare. At the start of the academic year September 2015 all sessions were full and we were operating at full capacity however over the course of the year we have become a victim of our own success. We have lost children (careless we know!) due to families relocating out of the area resulting in a drop in income. We now have several spaces in sessions over the week.

Our manager has completed her first full year at the pre-school and has proved to be a fantastic asset, highly regarded by the staff and parents and adored by the children. We have welcomed 2 new members of staff who have settled in and are enjoying being part of the team. One member of staff has completed her NVQ Level 3 and another member of staff has just started training for her NVQ level 2. We continually look at supporting and developing the skills of our other team members to further improve on their exceptional skills and abilities as and when finances allow.

Our staff team continue to improve our service and the care of the children through a range of fun and exciting activities including both adult led and free play activities which take place both inside & out. Thanks must go to Councillor Dickens for cutting back the trees in our outdoor area free of charge which allows more sunlight into our building and outdoor space.

The pre-school continues to run as a not-for-profit organisation registered with companies' house & the charities commission. We look at many ways of raising funds to ensure we continue to provide the resource to the village that we currently do. We were lucky to obtain a Technology Grant which has enabled us to purchase a new laptop which was desperately required when our old one gave up. We have also purchased an online assessment package called Tapestry which tracks the children's progress against the EYFS statements. Tablets have been purchased for staff to take photos and complete observations of the children. We are now loan free and have paid back all the money we borrowed to buy the new building. The building is now owned by the pre-school. The amount of money we are spending on consumables is considerably higher than last year due to increased numbers and tired worn out resources. We are looking for sponsorship to purchase a shed and new resources for the pre-school. Wages have increased with the national minimum wage increases and also with the introduction of the pension scheme. We are currently operating with a deficit budget.

We are currently advertising to fill our September sessions as there are currently a number of spaces. We run busy fingers on a Monday afternoon as an advertising tool to promote the setting to parents of young children. This session currently runs at a loss due to a member of staff being paid to run the session. From September 2017 we will no longer be able to run Busy Fingers as the government pushes for 30 hours of free childcare. This will increase our wage costs further.

We are lucky to have a dedicated voluntary committee who manages the pre-school in their spare time to ensure it remains the fantastic place it always has been. Without the committee we would not survive. We have been lucky to appoint a new chair to the pre-school committee –Mrs Tricia Norwell.

9. Aylesbury Vale District Councillor Llew Monger's report

The Winslow Ward of AVDC includes Padbury, Adstock, Addington, and Shipton in addition to Winslow itself. It is a two member Ward and I was re-elected in May 2015 for a four year term.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

The principle activities of the council are Planning, Housing, Benefits, Recycling & Waste collection, Licensing and Environmental issues plus Public car parks, and Community centres in Aylesbury. Matters such as Education, Transport, Social services and waste disposal are the responsibility of the County Council. Currently there is debate about creating a 'Unitary' authority which would administer all functions. Given the open antagonism between Neil Blake and Martin Tett (Leaders of the two councils) it is clear that a move to unitary status will not be without difficulty. Personally I have always been in favour of the principle of unitary councils but there are a number of ways to achieve this and there is much work still to be done to decide on the best model for AVDC.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Historically local authorities secured roughly 50% of their income from Council Tax and 50% from central government grants. The latter element is being steadily reduced and will have expired altogether by 2020. Councils must therefore reduce staff and services, increase council tax or find new sources of revenue. In most cases, including AVDC, it is proving to be a mix of all three. This is leading to the commercialisation of AVDC. Much is being made by senior officers and cabinet members of a range of initiatives aimed at generating new income streams which it is suggested could make the council financially self-sufficient by 2023. However, we have yet to see a business plan for any of these initiatives and nor has an overall forecast of income and expenditure been proposed. Despite the fact that there has already been investment in at least two of the projects no management accounts have been produced for them. There is no doubting the need to generate new income streams but what we have at present appears to be little more than wishful thinking.

PLANNING

Apart from income generation the other main focus of the council is the development of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). This plan will be the blueprint for housing and economic development across the vale through to 2031. A draft plan is to be published in June with a consultation period running through the summer.

Following that consultation a final version of the plan will be worked up and there will be a further consultation on this in early 2017 with the plan submitted for examination in March / April. Assuming a satisfactory examination it is anticipated that the plan will be adopted in the summer of 2017. The development of the plan is supposed to be overseen by a VALP Scrutiny Committee but this has met infrequently and not at all for the last six months. At my insistence there will be a meeting of the committee in May prior to the publication of the draft plan in June.

In the absence of an up to date Local Plan and the failure of AVDC to have the required five years housing land supply virtually any application for new housing is having to be agreed. In any event most larger villages, including Padbury, will be allocated new housing targets in VALP. For Padbury this could mean that applications for development at the old cricket pitch off the A413 (40 units) and at Poultry Field (50 units) and other smaller developments will eventually be agreed.

MY COUNCIL AND RELATED ACTIVITY

I am a member of the Strategic Development Management Committee and the VALP Scrutiny Committee (when it meets!). I also sit on the Member Development Committee which organises training and development sessions for council members. Although they meet rarely I am also a member of the Senior Appointments Committee and the Appeals and Complaints Committee. I represent AVDC on the Trustee Board of Buckingham and Winslow Citizens Advice. In addition to my membership of AVDC I am a member of Winslow Town Council where I Chair the Finance and General Purposes Committee. Through my involvement with the development of Neighbourhood Plans I am a Neighbourhood Plan Champion for the Department of Communities and Local Government.

In addition to my council related work I sit on the local board or the LEADER FUND (Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale) which distributes grants from the EU Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The fund supports projects in Farming, Forestry and Rural Communities. The application process is rigorous but grants of up to £50,000 can be achieved for appropriate projects.

I hold a Residents Surgery on the first Saturday of every month at the offices of Winslow Town Council and can be contacted at any time on 07808 096513 or at llewmonger@btinternet.com

10. Aylesbury Vale District Councillor Sue Renshell's report (submitted via e-mail)

Over the past six years AVDC has saved around £14 million, whilst losing 60% of the government grant. This has been achieved not only through efficiencies but through creating new income streams. Leaving the old model behind, we have become a commercial organisation, working to provide the services our customers want.

For example:

Aylesbury Vale Broadband. AVDC have used some of the New Homes Bonus to create their own broadband company to target areas with poor coverage in the Vale area. While residents benefit from improved internet access – it also generates a valuable return for the council.

While on the subject of the internet, I'd also mention that AVDC were the first council in the country to move all our IT to Amazon's Web Cloud. This allows the council to become IT infrastructure free, with significant savings in staffing and hardware, which in turn has freed AVDC from huge expenses relating to high cost software systems. This single strategy has driven massive organisational and service change, delivering a further estimated £6 million of savings over the past five years.

Other commercial ventures at AVDC include the formation of Limecart and IncGen. These brands will use local suppliers to provide home and garden services and products, as well as business services to residents and companies within the Vale.

In recent years the district has seen some of the fastest rates of housing growth in the country and over the next 20 years, under the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan, is potentially set to grow by a further 31,000 homes (a 40% increase). Regarding applications, this has placed extreme demand on our planning team, given that the cost of processing these applications isn't covered by the government's statutory planning fees, and therefore AVDC took the decision to concentrate on reducing costs. As a consequence, our planning team now operates entirely within the statutory fee of £172, with no subsidy from the council tax payer.

AVDC now has a fully flexible car pool for staff in partnership with the national car chain – Enterprise. This has resulted in better planning of journeys and has enabled the council to supply a low emission fleet – saving the taxpayer £100,000 annually.

Last November AVDC became the first council to run an online community lottery, and at this moment AVDC are selling more than 1800 tickets a week and are on track to generate around £55,000 a year for good causes, with more than 100 organisations taking part. It started as an alternative income for good causes when less funding will be available in the future. I can recommend buying tickets – as I've already won £2!

AVDC has a new website which encourages residents to contact them direct and receives 60,000 visitors a month, enabling customers to make contact whenever they want to.

The Gateway, our offices in Aylesbury, have office space enabling companies like the NHS to rent them out, and our conference areas are continuing to be hired out which generated £150,000 in 2015.

Recently AVDC invested council resources to refurbish the Swan Pool in Buckingham and awarded the management contract to "Everyone Active" in 2013. This has taken what was previously a management subsidy to a net saving of £600,000 a year.

11. Bucks County Councillor John Chilver's report (submitted via e-mail)

1. High Speed Two

The County Council will be petitioning the House of Lords on the Hybrid Bill. One successful achievement of previous lobbying was the decision made by High Speed Two Ltd to cancel the plans for a huge spoil heap near Steeple Claydon. Another recent success was an additional £1m compensation for the Steeple Claydon area.

2. East West Rail

The Hendy Review of current Network Rail projects stated that there would be 'significant delivery' of the Western Section between Bicester and Bletchley by March 2019 and completion within the next 5 year period (2019 – 24) although the actual completion date cannot be confirmed at this stage. Following the public consultation last autumn the EWR alliance is working on the outline design and construction programme. There will be a presentation to the Winslow Local Area Forum in September to which the public are welcome.

3. A413 Sustainable Travel Scheme

Public exhibitions and a consultation were held last autumn. The construction of the new footpath and cycleway from Buckingham to Winslow is scheduled to start this year. The cost (£ 1.8m) has been directly funded by the Department for Transport.

4. County Council Budget

The County Council freeze on all non-essential revenue expenditure enabled us to achieve a breakeven position at the financial year end. There are particular spending pressures in children's services and adults' social care. This year's Council Tax increase is 1.9 %.

5. Enterprise Zones

In his recent spending review the Chancellor announced three new enterprise zones in Aylesbury Vale at Silverstone, Westcott Venture Park and Arla/Woodlands near Aston Clinton. This is excellent news as it will boost local infrastructure, inward business investment and jobs.

6. Roads

This year's capital budget has set the roads capital maintenance total at £ 15m which will help to continue to address the backlog. Programmes for improvement include High Street and Buckingham Road Winslow and the A421 between Singleborough and Thornborough. In Padbury, Old End, Church Lane, Station Road and Westfurlong are scheduled for resurfacing. Preparatory work will be done in June to August and completion in September or October 2016.

7. Broadband

The Connected Counties broadband programme supported by both the County Council and AVDC is on target to achieve 90% superfast broadband coverage. Aylesbury Vale Broadband Ltd has been set up by AVDC to cover additional areas and is currently delivering a pilot scheme in North Marston and Granborough. Those who wish to be considered for further roll-out should register an interest on the Aylesbury Vale Broadband website.

8. Public Transport consultation

There is a transport needs consultation survey on the County Council website until 30th April giving an opportunity to share your views on local public and community transport. Buckingham and the surrounding area has been chosen for a pilot project to test how the funding for public transport can best be used.

9. Concessionary bus pass renewals

43,000 bus pass renewals were scheduled for the end of March and the County Council put in additional resources to cope with this. The process will be staggered in future years. A grace period has been agreed with local bus companies to continue to accept the expired passes until the end of April.

12. Alice Bessie Potter Trust Report (Mr. H. Paxton submitted via e-mail)

As you know, the Alice Bessie Potter Charity "year" begins on 1st February of each year.

During the period 01/02/14 to 31/01/16, the Charity Official Investment Fund contained 10,897 shares. This gave a Fund value at the beginning of the period of approximately £123,311 and as the financial market fluctuated, so did the Fund value throughout 2015 and 2016. However, by January of this year the overall value of the Fund had improved on previous periods, to stand at a final Fund value for the "year" of £129,878.

This enabled the Charity to support both Single and Double Beneficiaries at a slightly improved financial payment value over the two year period.

During the period, there has been an increase in the number of applicants to be Singles and Doubles Beneficiaries. Some of the Beneficiaries have moved out of the Village. At the Annual Benefits Meeting in November 2015 the Charity was supporting 17 Single and 11 Double Beneficiaries.

The Nominated Trustees from the Parish Council are Mrs. Irene DePear and Mr. Antony Picketts, with Mrs. Mary Chappell and Mr. Arthur Cox as the Co-opted Trustees. Mrs. Irene DePear remains as the Charity's Chairman.

In conclusion the Charity, its various accounts and funds remain in a healthy state and the Trustees are continually looking at ways to improve their investments in order to maintain the current level of support to the Beneficiaries.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their reports (which will be made available online via <https://padburyparishcouncil.com/>) and commented upon the enormous level of support received from both District Councillors Renshell and Monger as well as County Councillor Chilver.

There were no comments from the floor so the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the Annual Parish Meeting.