



WESTBURY PARISH COUNCIL

Notes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 18th May 2016 at Westbury Village Hall at 8.00 pm

Present Cllr James Stone (JS) Chair, Cllr Vicky Webb (VW) Vice Chair, Cllr Sue Barrett (SB), Cllr Alison Boughton (AB), Cllr Robin Bone (RB), Cllr Jeremy Banks (JB), Cathy Knott (Clerk) and 10 residents.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Graeme Cook, Jacky Owen, Paul Winks, Cllr Patrick Fealey and Cllr Robin Stuchbury,

Welcome

Cllr James Stone welcomed everyone to the new village hall and introduced his fellow Councillors and the Clerk.

Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10th June 2015 were agreed and signed.

Report from District Councillor Patrick Fealey

Aylesbury Vale District Council has continued to make significant savings to fill the funding gap created by annual reductions of Government Grants. The figure for the last six years stands at £14m. That savings figure is made up of costs reductions through increased efficiency plus additional income from commercial activities and asset rental.

The work is ongoing because we anticipate that a further £6m will be needed over the next three years until Government Grant disappears altogether.

Cost savings can't be generated merely by cutting out layers of management - that is only a race to the bottom and service provision will fail. What we're doing is creating a completely new organisational structure with just two main departments - Community Fulfillment and Customer Fulfillment.

The same range of services will be provided, plus additional ones determined by our customers, but the myriad of departments will disappear. This commercial approach to running a local authority is ground breaking, but essential to ensure that AVDC survives. Many other authorities across the country have buried their heads in the sand for too long - reluctant to implement changes and hoping that grants will return. They won't, and those councils run a serious risk of going broke in the very near future.

Some authorities have recognised that what we've done at AVDC is worthy of a closer look and 117 delegates attended a conference in February where we gave them an insight into how we've achieved such large savings. That was a free event but at a follow-up event a month later delegates paid to hear more details. We're now working with ten of those authorities who'll be engaging us on a consultancy basis to help them implement some of our ideas.

So what have we done?

We've moved completely to the cloud, using Amazon Cloud Services to store our data. No more PCs on desks and no servers in our offices thus reducing our maintenance costs dramatically. We were the first local authority in the country to go along this route.

We've introduced My Account. This is a facility that enables customers to interrogate our systems, and their personal information, whenever they want. They can set up direct debits to pay for their services, claim discounts on council tax, apply for licences and benefits, report problems with their bin collections - and that list will grow. It means that we can deploy the staff that used to handle these matters on more productive work.

The Vale Lottery was introduced last November - again, we were the first local authority to set one up - and it's already raising £60,000 a year for good causes across The Vale. To date, 111 community groups have signed up and people who enter can choose from that list where they'd like their money to go. 58 pence in the pound goes to good causes.

We're continuing to invest in commercial property and we've now spent £100m improving Aylesbury Town Centre by way of building the theatre, Waitrose, Travelodge and the new University. Not only will this investment make Aylesbury a better place to visit, improving the local economy, but it'll generate rental income for the Council. The next phase is to build four new restaurants with residential units above. We've just exchanged contracts with our developer partner and we're pressing on with the submission of a detailed planning application.

Aylesbury Vale Broadband was set up last year to provide superfast broadband in rural parts of The Vale. The pilot project in North Marston was successful so we're now pushing on to Granborough and looking for other areas to cover. Over 50 communities have registered an interest which makes choosing very difficult. We intended to provide **superfast** broadband but we are now offering **ultrafast** broadband - speeds of 300Mbps. BT has been extremely unhelpful and is trying to thwart our plans - a sure sign that we're doing things right and stepping on their toes - but we're adamant that we'll push on with our programme.

We've formed two other new companies to further our commercial aspirations. One will seek to provide additional services and products to residents and the other to commercial organisations. I can't tell you what those services and products will be yet because we'll be asking our customers what they want, rather than providing products that we **think** they want. We'll be sending out regular newsletters to those who've registered an interest to build up a customer relationship and generate ideas. Initially, we're targeting customers who've signed up to our brown bin service because they're already paying for an extra service and the response has been very encouraging.

Council Tax was increased by 1.99% this year - that amounts to £2.70 a year for the average household. Our longer term plan is to do away with a council tax charge altogether, but that will depend on the success of our commercial activities.

And whilst this has all been going on there's been the small matter of preparing our Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan. This will determine the location of housing and economic growth for the next 20 years, with its associated infrastructure. At present we're looking to accommodate around 31,000 new homes - 21,000 for our own requirements and 10,000 for the unmet needs of other authorities. We're insisting that detailed green belt and brownfield site reviews are undertaken by those other authorities to ensure that we're not being asked to take on housing that could be provided locally.

That's a quick run-through of where we are and what we've been doing. There's lots going on and more to come.

Reports from local clubs and organisations

St Augustine's Church - Pat English gave a report on behalf of The Revd Liz Simpson.

There are 2 services each month at St Augustine's, plus others at festival times and when we host the whole benefice. Harvest and Remembrance are particular times when we appreciate parishioners joining us, and it was very good at Christmas to have the church full for the various services, and this year at Easter to welcome children for an Easter egg hunt, which Paul Winks organised, after the service. We look forward to sharing other events to support both the Church and the Community Centre.

There are a small number of parishioners on the electoral roll, who come regularly to services and serve on the Parochial Church Council, and other villagers who very generously support fund raising efforts and help in practical ways by opening and closing the church, cleaning and arranging flowers, and we are very grateful to all of them. It is always difficult to find people to help with mowing and keeping the churchyard tidy, and so we are very grateful to those who come and mow the grass and tend the flowers to keep the churchyard looking lovely.

The church receives no money from central funds for the upkeep of the building, and so we have to work hard to keep our historic church in good condition. We have recently made some repairs to the plaster and roof.

We have carried out various fundraising events over the last year, among them the Plant Sale, and Christmas Bazaar, all well supported by parishioners.

Westbury is part of the West Buckingham Benefice, so Revd Liz Simpson the Rector, looks after 6 churches. We work together on some things, and most of the church's events for children and young people are run on a Benefice level.

Beachborough School continues to use the church building.

The church is always available to parishioners and others who have Westbury connections for weddings, baptisms and funerals.

The church is open all day – it's the church for the whole village, and we're glad that people come in at various times. We hope you feel able to do that if you'd like to, and we always welcome new ideas, and new people at services – which are advertised in the Link, and on the West Buckingham Churches website.

Halse Junior Football Club – Angela Gee

Halse is a football Club that has been running for just over 50 years. It was first established by Betty Kibble and her husband at their farm in Halse for the farm workers recreation.

Halse currently has 110 boys and girls playing youth football from ages 5-18.

We were a new team to the club this season, and needed to find a pitch to play.

We currently play at U11's in the Witney & District League.

We have progressed well this season after setting the boys some objectives of drawing 1 game, try and win 1 game and keep a clean sheet. In fact, as the season progressed and we got used to playing as a team, we have won and drawn more games than we have lost.

All the players and parents love the new facility at Westbury and can't wait to get the new season underway in September.

One of the last teams we played here said they think we have one of the best grounds and facilities in the league. On a final note, we have a new player joining our team that lives here in the village.

Westbury Wilds - Mrs Jacky Owen was unable to make the meeting but supplied a report which was read by Cllr JS.

Westbury Wilds is about half mile north of the village towards Biddlesden on the left hand side.

This woodland is about 20 acres, held in Trust for the residents of Westbury.

There are five Trustees who are chaired by our Vicar Liz Simpson. The original wording of the 1764 Enclosure Act is painted on a board in the belfry of the church.

The Wild Trust has two functions:

- To keep the woodland in a wild environment, offering lovely walks.
- The villagers are entitled to any fallen wood.

There is a 7 acre woodland to the south side of the green lane, on entering The Wild, which is private property.

Beachborough School - Jeremy Banks thanked the Parish Council for inviting him to give a report.

In the course of this year Beachborough has grown and it is now recognised as a leading independent school in the area. As this has happened, the school has continued to recruit new employees from within the parish as well as providing education for families who live in the parish. In doing so, it reduces pressure on class spaces in some local primary schools.

It is also important for the school to support local businesses that are in or close to the parish boundary. This has been evident with our support of the building of the Village Hall as well as the recently opened village shop and cafe. Elsewhere, Beachborough pupils continue to sell asparagus on behalf of Rupert and Clare Smith who kindly pass on a donation to the school charity.

Commitment to supporting a charity has always been an important characteristic of life at Beachborough and this year we have been raising money for our own Wetlands Community Project. A pond at Westbury Manor has been dredged and pontoons are being installed so children from Beachborough and local schools can take part in pond dipping and other science/geography topics.

Beachborough facilities continue to be let out to local sports clubs and most recently Westbury Cricket Club have based their 3rd XI at Beachborough. We are delighted to have this partnership with them.

On a more ad hoc basis Beachborough has hosted village initiatives including, for example, the mobile climbing wall. We would be delighted to help out in this way again, if asked.

With the wonderful transformation into our Village Hall it is possible that fewer village events will be hosted at Beachborough but we have been delighted to help out during the construction phase and the offer is always open.

Thames Valley Police – Nick Perks gave a report.

The Neighbourhood Policing Team's priorities for the next 12 months are

- Protecting vulnerable people & locations
- Tackling ASB
- Taking active measures to reduce demand on Police Service
- Mental Health

The Police Station in Buckingham at the Old Gaol has closed and the nearest station is now in Bicester. The restructure of Aylesbury Vales's neighbourhood policing teams has been put on hold for now by headquarters. As a result, the local neighbourhood team will remain as it is.

A mental health triage car is now operational where a mental health nurse accompanies police officers attending incidents where mental health may be a concern. This is proving very useful and effective as well as reducing police resources needed to deal with such incidents.

With regards to crime, there has been an increase in thefts from work type vans. Please ensure vehicles are locked. There have been 4 crimes recorded in Westbury during the last year – 2 burglaries, 1 vehicle theft and 1 criminal damage. Also, last week there were 2 cases of hare coursing (an illegal activity where dogs chase hares). Overall, Westbury is a very safe place to live and we are pleased ASB levels are still incredibly low.

Westbury Village Hall Association

Cllr Sue Barrett reported on the lead up to the opening of the new village hall.

Further to last year's report, we demolished the Pavilion at the beginning of July 2015 and completed the build end of March 2016. A few snagging issues continued until recently but the hall has been regularly used since the beginning of April.

Robin Bone oversaw the construction and worked closely with Edgar Taylor (the contractor) on a daily basis. This has ensured that the project has come in tight to budget and of a fantastic quality. Much thanks goes to Councillor Robin Bone for the exceptional amount of time and commitment he has given the project to ensure the high standard we now have. Also a massive thanks to Derek Crane, Lewis Crane, Sue Barrett and Cathy Knott, for ensuring the Funders' requirements were effectively dealt with and that the finances remained on track.

The Village Hall Committee is now disbanded and WVHA (Westbury Village Hall Association) and WSC (Westbury Community Shop & Cafe) are the day-to-day managers of the building with support from the Charity/Trustees. The structure of the management of the hall is as follows:

Westbury Parish Council leases the building to Westbury Parish Hall Charity, which subsequently leases to both WVHA and WSC. The management of WVHA is by committee with Vicky Webb as Chair and the management of the shop/café is by Susanne Ashley (part-time employed) and Paul Winks Chair of the WSC Committee.

Although WSC has only recently been opened, the village and surrounding users have been very enthusiastic in their support of this venture.

The Building has been short-listed for a New Building Award with Civic Voice and the award ceremony is on May 24th 2016 in London. Free entry, please apply for tickets if you are able to come.

You can register your place and anyone you would like to bring with you for FREE

here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/civic-voice-design-awards-ceremony-tickets-23092667791>

The Civic Voice Design Awards ceremony will take place on **Tuesday 24th May, from 5.30pm - 7.30pm in Portcullis House, London.**

Six weeks of use has resulted in achieving some of the outcome targets set by the grant givers. We now have a regular Youth Club supporting the under 18's and providing a welcome space to meet and enjoy activities specifically for young people (putting the **LAF funding** to good use). Regular youth football team, Halse Junior Football Club have played only one match in the new space but are returning next season. We will be hosting regular integrated pub/family/junior cricket nights on Fridays through the summer and a beacon for the Queen's birthday, was very well attended by all age groups in the village.

For the Official Launch last Sunday 15th May 2016, the whole village was invited as well as those funders who helped to make this possible. Their delight in the facility and the use by so many villagers and surrounding villagers has been recognised and commended, creating exactly the facility these funders had wanted to support. We still have several areas that require extra spending, for example the acoustics need reviewing and the out-door furniture and black-out blinds are all on the list. Vicky Webb and her team are well aware of these and others and are working on it.

Cllr Vicky Webb reported that we have now been running for 10 weeks. We have carried out a financial review and the bar is bringing in on average £113.00 per week (amounting to £7,000.00 by the end of the year) and we are hiring out the hall twice as much as we were. In some areas the costs are coming in higher than the old pavilion but we are very optimistic we'll meet them and make a profit. We are already meeting some of the outcomes with the popular Youth Club on Wednesday evenings and having the U11 Halse Junior Football Team using our great facilities. Some of the events we have planned include Bar Nights for the Euro Football on 10th and 11th June and a Westbury Glastonbury Night on 25th June. Although it is running well, there is no time for complacency. It has been a lot of hard work by a team of volunteers. If you would like to volunteer, please let me know.

Westbury Community Shop & Cafe - Paul Winks was unable to attend but sent in a report.

Many years of hard work by a small number of local residents who have formed Westbury Community Shop and Café Committee have been able to provide the local community with a brand new and much needed shop and café. This opened on the 9th May and is already becoming the focal point of the village. The success of this project was in part because of generous grants from Power to change and Heart of Bucks. A part time manager has been recruited and is running the shop on behalf of its committee. The success of the shop and café currently depends on volunteers and will need to continue the support of the local community to ensure its success.

Westbury Young People's Project - Paul Winks was unable to attend but sent in a report.

Westbury Youth club was started on Wednesday 13th April 2016 and runs each Wednesday between 6.30 pm and 8.30 pm. The club is open to all children aged between 8 years and 18 years and there is no charge, as youth engagement is one of the key outcomes of the overall project as agreed with the grant funders. The club has proved to be an instant success drawing up to 40 children each night from Westbury and some from the surrounding villages. Football, table tennis and table football have been popular but also Clinton Osborne from Animation Station has been present each youth club night working with the children to create short animations and also to enable the children to interview each other on film. The children have loved this and have had great fun doing it. A tuck shop is also open which has proved to be very successful and the children have also been fund- raising for the club themselves. It is intended that the youth club will continue each week on a Wednesday but its vulnerability is that it is run by volunteers and to ensure its longevity more adult volunteers are needed.

Chairman's and Councillors' reports

Playground - Cllr Alison Boughton

The playground continues to be well used by local children and others from surrounding villages. The yearly inspection has been compiled and there are no major issues reported.

The lovely benches have been made by Paul Winks with timber left over from the village hall – thank you Paul.

The playground needs new fencing and could do with new baby swings. I would like to put in equipment for disabled children, so I am looking at costs and funding. The bin does get misused - sometimes I find domestic and garden waste in it.

Highways – Cllr Alison Boughton

We have had lots of disruption lately on the A422, due to Anglian Water but this should all be finished now.

Transport for Bucks (TfB) have had a lot of changes recently that will affect us. They will have smaller teams who will be covering the whole of Bucks and will be prioritising jobs in each area they visit over a set period of time. Sunken drains are last on our list to do, and they will get round to it as soon as they can.

We now have a “passing bay” sign to erect on Playing Field Road and we are looking into signs regarding dogs on the playing field (keeping dogs on leads and cleaning up after them). We are in touch with AVDC for advice on fining owners etc (following the Fowling of Land Act 1996).

Speeding through the village is still an ongoing concern.

The grass verges have finally been cut! Thank you to May for also getting in touch with AVDC to get this overdue job done.

Footpaths – Cllr Sue Barrett

I have recently taken this responsibility over from Cllr James Stone. New/replacement signs have been erected on various footpaths. I would like to remind people that the pathway through Mill Farm to the village hall is not a public right of way. There is a public footpath from Littleworth to the 'new' road and a farm track that leads to the west car park (stone car park) at the village hall. Although this is privately owned, Mrs Owen has allowed village use of this. Please see PC notice board for clarification/map.

HS2 – Cllr Jeremy Banks

I presented a petition prepared for Westbury to the HS2 Select Committee at the House of Commons, demonstrating our concerns - particularly noise.

Unfortunately, the window for petitions for the House of Lords was very narrow and we missed getting our petition in on time.

I have received an email today advising of minor alterations to routes on this section which I will update Councillors on at the next meeting in June.

Planning – Cllr James Stone

We have been very quiet on planning this year in comparison to last year, with the majority of applications being residential extensions. The PAF site (Lodge Park/Meadow View) and Lormay (Main Street) are still ongoing housing developments in the village. We have been working well with Lodge Park regarding noise etc.

Utilities – Cllr James Stone

We have had a very frustrating year with street lighting with 8 lamps being out at one time. Thank you to villagers for reporting these. We sacked our previous contractor due to service and price and Balfour Beatty have taken over the contract. Most lamps have been fixed but some of the units installed over the last few years have started to burn out so we are looking to replace the head units.

There have been ongoing upgrades over the last 10 years with the latest ones on the A422. Three lamps here were replaced with LED lighting which will last longer and offers better lighting. Graeme Cook has now taken over the responsibility for utilities.

Chairman's Report – Cllr James Stone

I took over as Chairman in April after 6 years as a Councillor.

Thank you to Derek Crane who has given his selfless support, especially over the last 2 years, and has been an integral part of the build. I would also like to thank all the Councillors and Clerk for the work they have done over the last year. Although challenging, it will be a less intense year ahead. We have two new Councillors on the Council and I would like to welcome Graeme Cook and Robin Bone.

We have a lot of organizations and Clubs that contribute heavily to the village, making Westbury an amazing place to live. Please support the new village hall association, shop and café committee and bar committee by volunteering if you are able to do so. It is a successful asset to our village.

Finances – Clerk Cathy Knott

The accounts are in the process of being internally audited. A lot of money has passed through the accounts in the last year due to the village hall project.

Derek Crane and myself have gone through the accounts and have produced a bank reconciliation and accounting statement and Derek has liaised with his son Lewis, an accountant who has been advising us through the whole building process to make sure we follow correct procedures.

The next stage is for the Chair, James Stone to go through the figures with Cllr Robin Bone (who has been heavily involved in the spends regarding the village hall) before Sections 1 & 2 of the Annual Governance Statement are signed off and sent to the external auditors.

The accounts for 2015/16 will be made available to the public between 20th June and 29th July 2016.

Open Forum for questions

A discussion took place on the amount of vehicles travelling through Westbury. HGV's belonging to SugaRich, Faccenda's, the Turweston Aerodrome and private cars from Beachborough. Cllr JB empathised on the last point and apologised for the amount of Beachborough traffic. He is looking into installing a mini bus route with 4 hubs in the area so that there will be fewer cars coming into Westbury.

Open Reach have been in the village a lot recently installing fibre optic broadband.

Village attendance at tonight's meeting – it was decided to do a leaflet drop next year to encourage better attendance.

Archer Cleaver thanked the Parish Council for the amount of effort they have put into the new village hall and Cllr VW thanked Cathy Knott for all her work.

.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm