



## MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021 AT 7PM Via Zoom

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

Matt Reid (Chairman), Ian Hill (Vice-Chairman), Terry Jackson, Tim Horton, Steve Bolingbroke, Nicky Smallbone, Margaret Noon, Keith Woolfson, Richard Dorney-Savage

**Co-opted Members:**

Jenny Wilkinson (Operations), Gill Bindoff (Planning and NPAB), Keith Jackson (NPAB).

**Speakers:**

Jeannette Wooster - WCAG

**Members of the Public:**

20

**Officer:**

Kristina Tynan

**District Councillor:**

Anna Badcock

**Press:**

Anna Colivecchi

1. Welcome by the Chairman – Matt Reid

Matt Reid welcomed everyone to the meeting

2. Apologies

Roger Beattie, Rob Smith, Steve Harrod (County Councillor).

3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 23rd May 2019 to be agreed and signed as a correct record.

**Resolved:** That these are a correct record of the meeting and to be signed by the Chair.

4. Presentation and Acceptance of the Annual Parish 2019 report.

The report was accepted. The Chairman's report and Reports from Chairs of Committee are in the pack. There are also reports from organisations in the town. The report can be found on our website [www.watlington.org](http://www.watlington.org)

5. Chairman's report

**Pandemic response**

This last year saw the ending of the first major lockdown in summer 2020 and the introduction of two further lockdowns in the Autumn of 2020 and the Winter of 2021. The period between the lockdowns allowed the District and County Councils time to put proper resources in place that eased the strain on the local volunteer network and parish office response that had been so effective in the first lockdown. As the surplus switch board

capacity had been rented on a short-term basis, we were also able to close the Parish helpline once the initial need for general help had fallen away. Everyone appeared to settle into the same routine for the next two lockdowns although risk assessments for staff and parish buildings were reappraised each time to make sure the guidance was updated appropriately. Councillors had to adjust to having online meetings. I would like to record here my thanks for all the businesses, volunteers, staff and Councillors for carrying on throughout the pandemic and for keeping life as close to normal as the rules would allow.

**Edge Road** – MR said this will be a separate item later in the agenda.

Thanks as always is reserved for all of you who volunteer your time for some local activity or simply participate in your own way day to day in this incredible community.

## 6. Committee Chairman's Reports

All reports are in the annual pack.

### **Chair of Operations Report** – Ian Hill

The Operations Committee deal with operational matters concerned with the use, monitoring, replacement, maintenance and enhancement of Watlington assets, including those of the Sports Pavilion and Allotments as well as those for which the council has taken responsibility. This includes spending decisions within the agreed budget for the relevant items.

In April 2020 we started the year with 37 projects on our list of which 12 were high priority and we finished the year in March 2021 with 2 more projects of which 16 are high priority. However, of the initial 12 priority projects, 7 have been completed, 2 are in progress, 2 awaiting decisions from OCC and 1 has been adopted into OCC's own programme (20 mph in the town)

Examples of the type of projects the committee undertake are:

Footpath 13 from The Goggs to the Willow Ponds which used to be unusable in wet weather. We installed new surfacing and drainage and it now good enough to survive the winter months with no more than minor puddling. [We were very lucky to get a grant from these works from TOE]



Speed Indicator Devices (SID's) – we have purchased 2 units which will be rotated around the parish. We are still waiting for 5 poles from OCC and as soon as they arrive the poles and SID's will be put up. For a list of locations please contact the parish office.

*Recreation ground*



*Spreading the load*



*Mainly the work of volunteers*

The recreation ground is very well used all year round and you only need to visit on a sunny afternoon after school or a sunny weekend to see this. But it requires continual maintenance with our caretaker Bob carrying out much of the routine work. Some tasks are just too big for one person and we get help for these. Sometimes it is volunteer teams such as above, and sometimes paid contractors. We are currently looking at what can be done about the “i-play” which has not worked for months. Replacement with something needing less maintenance is being considered and ideas are welcome.

*Recreation ground*



*Skatebowl design*



*Half pipe landing area*

*Mainly the work of volunteers*

Watlington Parish Council are very proud of our facilities for skate boarders and BMX bikers but they are getting old. This year they have undergone refurbishment which will squeeze another few years life out of them, but we are starting to look at future options. In the meantime we are very grateful for the brilliant job of refreshing the bowl and half-pipe done mainly by volunteers.

We take great pride in our town and were delighted when a couple, relatively new to the town, offered to restore the town gates to a good condition. We provided the paint and they provided the labour. We thank them for this on-going task.



*Thank you to the  
volunteers who  
did this ...*



By now I hope you are getting the message that one paid employee and this committee of six people depend on the willingness of volunteers to take on a range of tasks around the parish. I cannot thank these volunteers enough – Watlington has much to proud of, but much is dependent on volunteers and a range of organisations to keep it thriving.

The Operations committee in many ways are organisers rather than “doers” of this never-ending task.



Another permanent fixture on the operations agenda is Hill Road car park. With parking limited in the town we are very aware of the need to balance the demands of residents without off-road parking against the need for space for visitors to the town to leave their cars. We are very aware that Watlington as a community thrives because of its wide range of shops and businesses, but residents alone cannot keep these concerns afloat – we must pull in people from outside the town.

This year we have refreshed the car park and at the same time taken the opportunity to increase the number of short stay spaces While Westminster is pushing its “get active” policy, we have finally got round to installing a cycle rack in the car park.

7. Reports from Local Organisations

**Watlington Climate Action Group (WCAG)** – Jeannette Wooster (Slideshow is attached to these minutes)

Watlington Climate Action Group is speaking here for the first time, thank you for asking us. I am Jeannette Wooster, Secretary of the group.

2 years ago, we existed as a 5-day old Facebook group, set up in response to climate related discussions on the Watlington Town Noticeboard.

At the annual Parish Council meeting around the same time, Amber Chainey, 19 year old councillor, and her friends spoke passionately on the need for Watlington to take action and ran a brainstorming session.

Our first activity as WCAG was to assimilate those ideas and hold two further public meetings to prioritise them based on impact and ease of implementation. By the Autumn we had created a strategy for our own group based on that activity and made recommendations to the Parish Council.

Update on our main projects:

1) **Education & Awareness**

- Understanding and engagement is a pre-requisite for action. We aim to inform and support people about how they can choose to live more sustainably, as well as why and how they can get involved with and support larger community-based projects
- We have done this through Watlington Times articles, social media, newsletter, our website, films, and many public events, collaborating often with other organisations in Watlington such as ArtWeeks and Icknield Community College. We've tackled subjects from food, to clothing, to green investing, electric vehicles, renewable energy and more.

2) **Plastic Free Watlington**

- Single use plastic causes problems throughout our ecosystem – plastic microparticles are in the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat, and larger pieces cause huge problems for wildlife. Disposal is an issue, and both the production of, and disposal of single use plastic increases our carbon footprint.
- This project aims to raise awareness and tackle the problem by encouraging individuals, businesses and community groups to reduce single use plastic.

3) **Green Plan**

- The objective of the Green Plan is to sequester carbon and improve and enhance biodiversity through natural climate solutions.
- This originally started as tree planting, but it quickly became apparent that we have very special habitats around Watlington, all of which sequester carbon. We now have initiatives addressing hedgerows, road verges, gardens and other habitats as part of this collaborative project working with Watlington Environment Group and others.

4) **Homes & Energy**

- Housing is the biggest contributor to our carbon footprint in the Parish
- We are looking to reduce the carbon footprint of both our existing housing stock, and campaign for high standards for new housing developments. We have delivered flyers with energy saving tips to homes in Watlington and undertaken a thermal imaging project for 50 homes. Come to our Homes. & Energy meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> May to find out more about our plans in this area.

JW stated that Climate is **the** great challenge of our lives. The last year has been difficult with the pandemic but it has shown what we can do when we pull together and we will need to.

The last decade was the hottest decade on record and the causes and effects of climate change are now broadly accepted as scientifically beyond doubt. The target we are working towards in Watlington is net zero by 2030 - a target which is shared by South Oxfordshire District Council and many other councils across the country.

It's a massively challenging target – and not something that can be outsourced to one organisation to deal with. We can tackle this most successfully when we work together as a community – WCAG, the Parish Council, the many organisations and businesses in Watlington, and as individuals.

Please contact us if you would like to help with any of our projects, find out what you can do as an individual or get advice on how your organisation can take action. You can contact us via our Facebook group, or website [www.watlingtonclimateaction.org.uk](http://www.watlingtonclimateaction.org.uk)

MR said that phenomenal work has been done and it has shown what can be done when the impetus is there.

**Methodist Church** – Judy Crockett said that the Church has managed to put on a new roof despite Covid 19 and they are pleased to be hosting some local artists for Arts Week. Anna Badcock had arranged a grant for the ArtHub and thanked her for this.

8. Report from Town Hall Trust Body – Tim Horton

The written report is in the annual pack for people to read and for much of last year there were no meetings. However, an upgrade of the heating system has been done. In the coming year the body is hoping to attend to the brickwork issue. There also be a mini re-launch of the Town Hall as a key venue in the town. TH thanked the Parish Council and members of the Trust Body for their support.

9. Report from County Councillor – Cllr Steve Harrod

His report is in the annual pack. MR said that Steve Harrod had been very supportive to Watlington and our neighbouring parishes.

10. Report from District Councillor – Cllr Anna Badcock

AB reported that the officers at SODC responded amazingly to the Covid pandemic with some being taken off their normal roles to take on positions to support local communities as well as operating the Covid grants available and said she was so grateful to them for running various schemes to help individuals, communities and local businesses. They are now working on the restart business Covid grants. They also worked on Test and Trace. Central Government supported the leisure centres who are working with preventative social prescribing of activities to help with health problems.

The Local Plan was at a stage it could not be reversed as the current leadership had wanted and this cost £250,000 in legal bills. Bio- Abundance had put in a legal challenge on this but lost. The next Local Plan will be a joint one with the Vale. AB suggested that all Councillors pay attention to the meetings which will be held on this. CIL and Section 106 applications are now open again.

During last year the brown bins for garden waste had to be suspended for a while due to the pandemic with operators off sick etc. There were lots of queries about the waste collection during this time. AB said that if anyone has problems with bin collections to contact her direct

as it is important that they are reported in.

The Ox-Cam Expressway will no longer go ahead.

AB stated that she is an advocate of putting support into local early years and has supported the Chalgrove/Watlington Family Hub centre. A grant was also given to WCAG to set up their website.

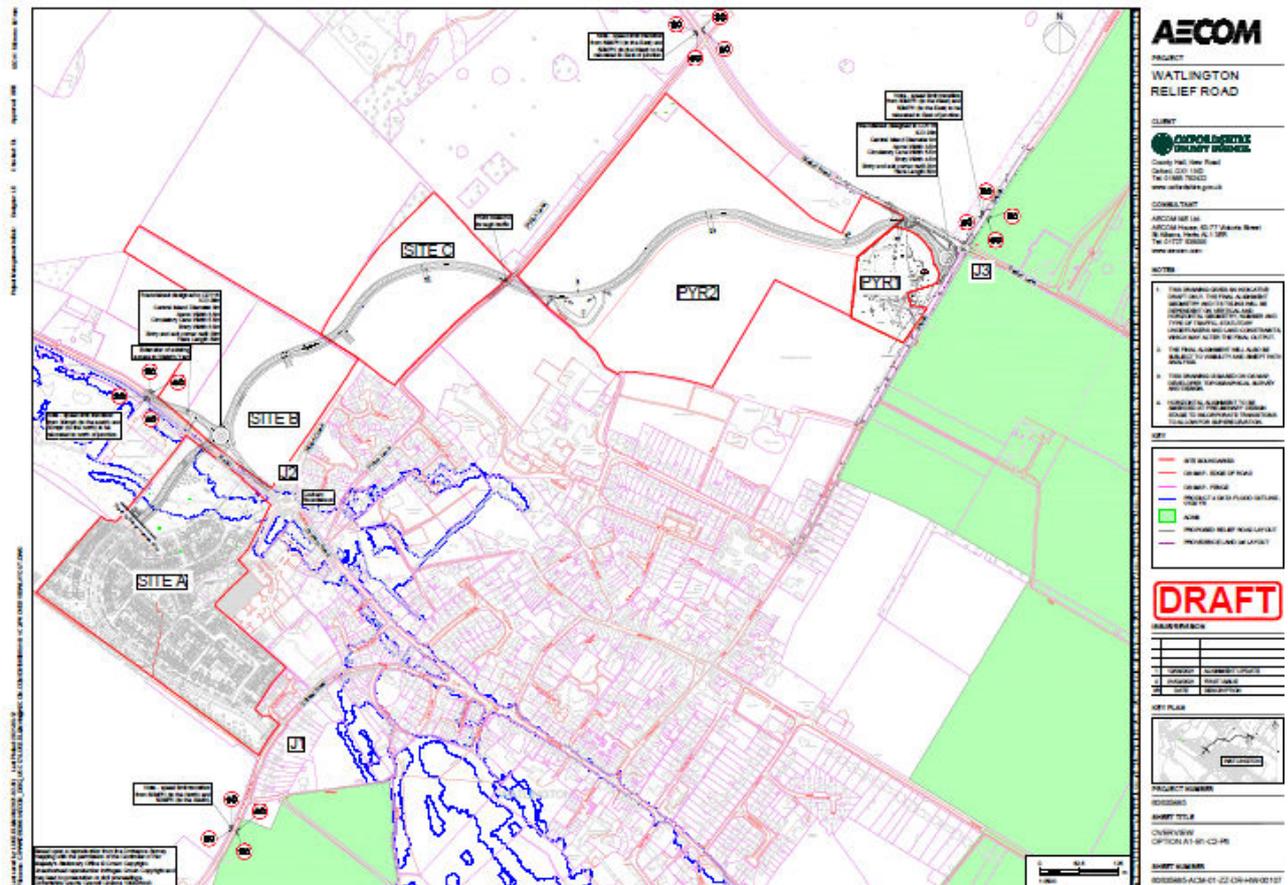
11. Update on the Edge Road and Slideshow Presentation – Matt Reid

Work finally commenced on Site A in the Autumn of 2020 and progress is reasonably rapid. Simultaneous to the build out of Site A has been the adoption of the safe guarded route in the Districts Local plan which came into force in December 2020. Talks with the OCC Highways consultants (AECOM) around the routing of the Edge Road were already in flight, but this adoption in local planning law accelerated the need to work together with our neighbours in Pyrton in order to find a series of compromises that both parties could live with. Coming out of this joint work has been the creation of a new working group that consists of 3 Watlington Parish Councillors and 3 Pyrton Parish Councillors. This group allows for discussions on the interface region between Watlington and Pyrton that will soon be filled with new developments.

With regards the Watlington sections of the Edge Road, we are still working to try and secure a solution to offset a hard T-Junction at the Britwell Road end of the scheme, but despite appearances this is a non-trivial problem. There is still a window of opportunity in which to solve this particular issue within the scope of the overall Edge Road scheme and we will be keeping local residents up to date with progress. Residents of Marlbrook will be pleased to hear that a new roundabout in the far side of Site B will be serviced by a re-alignment of the B480 Cuxham Road that will feed in from the existing roundabout. The Edge Road itself will then meet this new roundabout by way of a bridge like structure that will take it over the environmentally sensitive brook. Drawing the site further into Site B will also protect against additional ground water run-off from the new developments. Residents of Pyrton Lane will no doubt be pleased to hear that Pyrton Lane will be de-prioritised as a part of this plan and will only be open to walking, cycling and possibly horse riding upon final completion of the road. This will of course give much greater connectivity between Watlington and the large tracts of amenity land that will open up for walkers on the edge of Pyrton. Walking and cycling routes in line with these aims have already been included in the Neighbourhood Plan, but we will look to go further now that the details of the scheme are starting to solidify. We hope that the Icknield School will be with us for many more years, but we appreciate that the County Council will build a state of the art secondary and sixth form in Chalgrove should the planning application ever make it through.

The route of the Edge Road will pass close to the existing Sports Hall area of the current site, which will allow for school buses to use the new road rather than Love Lane, but in doing this the new playing fields that will be given over to the school will be on the other side of the road. Should the school leave then the new playing field will be given over to Pyrton Parish Council, but we have secured informal agreement that this will be retained for the use of community sports. The ICC sports field will of course be fenced off, but the land to the north will become something of a new 'community green' area for Pyrton that I'm sure many people in Watlington will also have the chance to enjoy. To put these plans in perspective, some 66% of the land on the Pyrton side of the Parish Boundary will be made over to amenity space of some description and the development on the Watlington side will be limited to somewhere around 100 new homes.

**See AECOM Plan overleaf**



11. Announcements

**Plastic Free Watlington** – Watlington has been given Plastic Free Approved Status by Surfers Against Sewerage. MR thanked TJ and WCAG for their work to obtain this. This process was started over a year ago and this is fantastic news. A lot of our businesses, community groups and Watlington Parish Council have signed a pledge to not use single use plastic.

**Art Weeks** – Will be held this year and will be held 15<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> May.

**Community Awards** – These will be held in 2022

12. Residents Questions to Parish Councillors, District Councillor and Local Organisations

**Q: What impact would Chalgrove Have on land supply?**

It was noted that Chalgrove is the only major site on the SODC Local Plan that is not on the green belt but the least sensible to develop. Whilst Martin Baker remain on site there should not be any building on it. There is also not enough road infrastructure in place. When other sites were signed off in South Oxfordshire, Chalgrove was at the bottom of the list. WPC objected to the Chalgrove Development in August 2020. An SODC Officer is modelling what impact Chalgrove would have on Watlington.

There were no other questions and Matt Reid thanked everyone for attending and said that last year was not a year any of us would forget.

**THERE BEING NO OTHER BUSINESS THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.20PM**

