

Annual Parish Meeting 2019 - Reports from the Parish Council

WPC CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 23rd MAY 2019

Current Members of Watlington Parish Council

Matt Reid (Chairman), Ian Hill (Vice-Chairman), Alex Basden, Roger Beattie, Amber Chainey, Nick Hancock, Tim Horton, Terry Jackson, Andrew McAuley, Nicky Smallbone, Rob Smith, Stephanie van de Pette, Bonnie Williams, Keith Wolfson

2018/19 members who are no longer councillors

Tony Williamson (died in office February 2019), Fiona Butler (resigned February 2019), Jeremy Bell (resigned February 2019), Fergus La Page (resigned March 2019), Tom Bindoff (did not stand for re-election), Bob West (did not stand for re-election)

Staff to the Council

Kristina Tynan (Clerk), Rachel Gill (Assistant to the Clerk), Bob Thomas (Watlington Caretaker), Christine Wiltshire (additional office support)

Projects and actions

Perhaps the biggest news this last year has been the Neighbourhood Plan referendum which occurred last June and showed 81% in support of the plan on an electoral turnout of 47.4%. This was a great result which vindicated the hard work put in by so many community volunteers. The plans for site A, off Britwell Road have already been submitted to the District Council for approval and the gateway site corresponding to the ex-MOD site at the Pyrton crossroads has been approved subject to reserved matters as a new care home. Submissions for sites B and C along with revised outline planning for PYR2 in our neighbouring parish of Pyrton are expected to come forward imminently.

There has of course been a recent change of political representation at South Oxfordshire District Council, who are now headed by a Liberal Democrat coalition with the Green Party, so it remains to be seen whether the Local Plan to 2034 put forward by the previous Conservative led District Council will now continue to advance unopposed. The ramifications for our Neighbourhood Plan and delivery of an edge road are still to be seen due to the dependence on growth deal monies that may or may not now be available subject to any shifts in strategy.

Andrew McAuley has chaired our planning committee since May 2018 and continues in that role this coming year, much assisted in this rather weighty task by the continued support of the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Board team facilitated by Gill Bindoff. The neighbourhood plan team have continued to remain active despite the final adoption of the plan and we continue to welcome their constructive input.

Strategy has been headed up this last year by Steph Van de Pette who has done an impressive job of overhauling the procedures and communications policies of the council. You will notice that we have a new website and that there has been strong engagement of the community on a number of projects both in the real world and in the virtual one! Steph has also created something of a new liaison role with local business that has brought the work of the Parish into synchronisation with the High Street, so I'm sure we can look forward to continued successes on this front. We're lucky to have a number of environmentally conscientious members of council and I think we see the culmination of this in the lead that the strategy committee has taken in the Climate Change debate even before the recent Extinction Rebellion protest in London. This is a very real and pressing challenge that will now report half yearly.

With regards Operations there have been a number of new projects following the successful refurbishment of the public toilets last year. This year's developments have seen the submission of plans for both a multi-use games area in the recreation ground as well as a new performance space

in the paddock. We're extremely thankful to Jenny Wilkinson for her continued commitment to maintaining the WC's as well as heading up the new Watlington Volunteer Force this last year. Former councillors Bob West and Tom Bindoff are thanked for their solid effort in progressing the work this committee through the year.

A new allotment committee was formed this year in order to bring consistency to the Council's governance of its assets and this committee is already working well in the interests of the allotment holders.

The pavilion and sports field committee continues to deliver the fabric of the building required to facilitate sport, but the individual clubs themselves have enjoyed yet another incredible year of success especially in relation to junior membership.

I'm pleased to report that at the time of writing that one of the last remaining hurdles to moving the transfer of the Charlotte Coxe trust back to Watlington has been completed, so we hope that approval for the transfer from the Charities Commission will now be one of the final steps to be completed.

Plans for traffic calming in both Christmas Common and Pyrton Lane are now progressing well thanks to the close involvement of the respective communities concerned and its hoped that we will finally see the results of these proposed traffic related improvements in this course of this next year. Whilst on the issue of traffic, we have seen signs installed at Jn 6 of the M40 showing the weight restriction and there has also been a noticeable increase in the number of prosecutions brought against HGV's over 7.5t entering Watlington illegally.

There have been many other developments over the course of the Council year, so I can only apologise if we've been unable to summarize progress on a project that is important to you. You will find more detailed separate reports in this pack that detail the work of each individual committee, so if you want more answers to questions that haven't been raised here then please come along to the annual meeting on the 23rd May and ask them in person or email the parish clerk in advance so that we can prepare a more detailed response.

Councillors and Staff

Many will already be aware of the passing of Councillor Tony Williamson back in February. Tony was well aware of his impending departure but continued to work tirelessly on Parish Business as he had always done for some 30 years right up until it was no longer physically possible to do so. He leaves a lasting legacy that includes too many achievements to list here, but perhaps most visible are his involvement in the building of the new primary school as well as Watlington's sports pavilion. He was adamant that the Charlotte Coxe Trust should become a Watlington based body and pursuing this outcome will continue to be our lasting tribute to his memory.

Our staff continue to form the strong back bone on which we depend for both the day to day inquiries from parishioners as well as supporting our Councillors in their duties and evening meetings. Dealing with constant interruptions and unresponsive third parties on our behalf takes their toll and we have traditionally struggled to give our staff the holiday time which they are due each year. As a result of this we introduced a week's office closure in August this last year. I'm hopeful that the Council will see fit to recommend a similar arrangement this year. For those who may be newly arrived in Watlington Kristina Tynan is our principal clerk and heads up a dedicated team that includes, Rachel Gill, Chris Wiltshire and Bob Thomas our community caretaker. As ever, we are thankful for the additional support given to us throughout the year by Sarah Pullen, Denise Allnutt, Dan Hendy and Paul McKnight. I'd like to thank all Councillors who served in the last four-year term as well as all those that have volunteered to serve in the next.

Perhaps our biggest thanks though needs to be 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.
Matt Reid

Finance and Staff Committee

The Finance and Staff Committee lost a committed and knowledgeable member when Tony Williamson sadly passed away, he will be greatly missed. The Committee met four times this year. One of the very long, ongoing issues the committee and Full Council is dealing with is the transfer of the Sole Trusteeship of the Charlotte Coxe Charity. This has moved on a little and we have agreed to proceed with the transfer of the sole trusteeship from Oxfordshire County Council to Watlington Parish Council, although this has not yet happened. There will be no financial risk to the Parish.

The precept this year was increased in line with inflation. Where does your money go? Sadly because of cuts by SODC over the past few years it has to go a lot further! Grants were made to the Watlington Youth Club, the Watlington and Chalgrove Children's Centre and local bus services. Grants were also given to the Town Hall, the CAB, grass cutting in the churchyard, Watlington Art Week, Watlington Community and Volunteer Awards and the Christmas trees in the town. The Parish Council has a comprehensive grant making policy available to review on our website.

The staff costs were increased in line with NALC guidelines making a total of £35,000. Our current staff are an invaluable asset to the community, and we thank them for their continued loyalty.

The remaining precept covers the maintenance of the Pavilion, the sports field hedge, play areas in the recreation and paddock, the Parish Office and equipment, car parks, trees, allotments and bollards. Also hire of the sports field, grass cutting, gardening, general office services, insurance and cleaning are all included.

SODC continue to fund the public conveniences and contributions from the Watlington traders help with the maintenance of the car park. Other income comes from the hire of the Pavilion, West Room, Parish Office, Town Hall and Allotment rents.

The Parish Council will receive a sum of money from the Young Peoples Fund. This money is to be designated to secure a long-term dedicated building for the use of young people or if not used within five years from the transfer date, to only be spent on charitable purposes following advice from residents of the parish.

The Parish Office was closed for one week in August for staff holidays. We expect this to happen again this year.

Pavilion and Sports Field Committee

The PSFC committee is responsible for the management of the pavilion building and the playing fields. It is a joint committee with four parish council members and two members each from the cricket and football clubs. It meets quarterly or as needed.

Since the installation of the CCTV and new car park lighting there has been a reduction in vandalism and once again our thanks go to SODC and a grant received through Anna Badcock, our district councillor.

We have installed new recycling bins outside the pavilion, and we hope that these will help with the proper removal of rubbish.

Lack of storage has always been a problem, so the football club have gained permission to put another small container next to the existing one on the edge of the car park. The football club have been having trouble replacing their cleaner, if anyone is interested please contact the Parish Office and we will get a message to the club.

We will once again be putting a portaloo in the car park for the summer and although we have invested in a poover for the collection of dog mess, there is still a problem for the cricket and football teams and I would ask that as there are many children using the grass areas that everyone continues to pick up their own dog's mess.

The Pavilion is regularly used by Football Club, Cricket Club, Aunt Sally, Pool, Darts, Scouts, Youth Club, U3A, Alzheimer's Society and Smurf-Fit. We welcome also a regular session of circle dancing. Please enquire at the Parish Office if you would like to hire the facility.

The planning application for the MUGA has been re-submitted and if successful we will be looking for funding from various sources.

Planning Committee

Chairman's Report 2018/19

Members: Andrew McAuley (Chair), Jerry Bell, Tom Bindoff, Ian Hill, Terry Jackson, Fergus Lapage, Matt Reid, Rob Smith (Vice-Chair), Bob West.

Co-opted members: Peter Richardson, Tony Powell

During 2018/19 there have been significant changes in planning and local policies. Foremost of these have been the adoption of the Watlington Neighbourhood Development Plan (WNDP), new versions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the consultation on, and submission of, SODC's Local Plan 2034. The significance of Watlington having a 'made' neighbour development plan cannot be overstated. The policies within the WNDP now form part of SODC planning policy framework and carry full weight in all planning decisions both at Parish and District level.

Throughout the year the Planning Committee met 14? times to consider a very wide range of applications from listed building consent for work to replace windows to full applications for housing development on the large sites identified in the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan. In accordance with Government policies laid out in the NPPF, members of the Planning Committee and the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Board have worked closely with the County and District Councils as well as developers to ensure that the proposals that are being put forward meet the policies within the WNDP as well as the aspirations and requirements of the community. This work has ensured that the requirement for an edge road linking Britwell Road with Shirburn Road has become a reality and that no development will be granted without the road being funded and built.

Following the adoption of the WNDP, the decision was taken to enlarge the committee by co-opting two members of the WNDP team (non-councillors). Their role, as non-voting members of the committee is to advise on the policies within the WNDP as well as district and national planning policy.

The following key applications are of particular note:

P18/S1259/FUL 10 Hill Road, Watlington. Erection of a detached two storey dwelling with associate parking and landscaping. WPC objected on the grounds of overdevelopment of the site and overwhelming impact on an important building in the town which is at the edge of the Conservation Area. SODC approved the application.

P18/S1822/FUL 40 Brook Street, Watlington. Erection of 2 x 2 bed cottages and 2 x 4/5 bed detached houses. WPC objected to this application on the grounds that it did not comply with the policies in the WNDP, highway safety and impact on the Watlington Conservation Area. The objection was upheld by SODC.

P18/S0002/O Outline application for the provision of a care home, 37 retirement units and staff accommodation. This application is on the site of the old MOD Depot on Shirburn Road. The application also provides land for the edge road. WPC supported this application. SODC approved the application in April 2019.

P18/S1902/O The bungalow, Shirburn Road, Watlington. Demolition of existing house and erection of up to five starter units. WPC objected to this application and endorsed the objections raised by OCC Highways. There were also concerns over the lack of detail on the impact on the local area.

P18/S2393/FUL Open Yard, Watcombe Manor, Ingham Lane, Watlington. Change of use from B1 to create five dwellings and demolish modern barn and build three dwellings. WPC approved this application.

P17/S3231/O Land at Britwell Road, Watlington. Full planning application for demolition of existing pig farm and the erection of 183 dwellings, outline application for 650sqm of commercial premises and all associated infrastructure and landscaping. The application also includes provision of a section of the edge road. This application was approved by WPC at a special public meeting of the planning committee on 18th September 2018. As part of the approval WPC outlined 14 criteria on which they wished to see further detail. This application has not yet been determined by SODC. The applicant has appealed on the grounds of lack of determination. However, WPC remains engaged with the developer as this is an important application for the delivery of the edge road.

P17/S1737/FUL Land South of Britwell Road Britwell Road Watlington OX49 5JX. The erection of 18 residential dwellings (C3) plus associated car parking, landscaping and new access to be created off Britwell Road. This application was objected to by WPC in March 2018 on the grounds of highways safety, flood risk and adverse impact on the Watlington Conservation Area and the AONB. The SODC refusal was issued on 28th July 2018 and the developer has failed to lodge an appeal within the statutory six months.

As chairman I would like to extend my gratitude to all the members of the Planning Committee for their hard work and conscientious, balanced and meticulous approach to the decision making process. At the forefront of our decisions has been the community's desire to retain the historic nature of Watlington whilst accepting that change is upon us and must be handled sympathetically.

I would also like to thank those members of the committee who have stood down over the past year. Their time and effort has been very much appreciated.

Andrew McAuley (Chairman)

Operations Committee

Members in 2018-2019:

Chairman: Bob West **Vice-chairman:** Tom Bindoff

Roger Beattie, Ian Hill, Terry Jackson, Fergus Lapage (until Mar 2019), Tony Williamson (until Jan 2019)

Co-opted member: Jenny Wilkinson

The Operations Committee is responsible for managing the Parish Council's assets and their maintenance programme, as well as identifying issues for action by the County and District Councils.

The main successes during this period included the completion of the public toilet refurbishment with toilets and urinals replaced and a new floor laid. These now look far cleaner than they have in years, thanks in no small part to the hours spent in keeping them clean by a local volunteer.

The triangle of waste land off Cuxham Road has been restored with an imaginative, and low maintenance, scheme based on a dry stream running across a shingle bank. This has converted an eyesore into a place we can be proud of. We are currently working on providing a bench in this area for use by those waiting for buses.

A minor change but a huge benefit has been achieved by realignment of the parking spaces at the west end of High Street to overlap the footpath area. The extra 40 centimetres has made a huge difference to the buses which struggled to get round the previously very tight bend. This work was triggered in part by the bus operator threatening to withdraw the service into the town centre to avoid numerous complaints about buses mounting the kerbs and possible damage to properties.

Other completed projects include the addition of Barbara's Door to provide external access to the west Room making it a far more convenient place for meetings; the provision of outdoor table tennis facilities at the recreation ground; and awning to provide shelter at the tables in the children's area of the Rec.

Two significant projects have now passed the design stage and the plans are awaiting approval by SODC. These are the performance space for the Paddock and the multi-use games area (MUGA) for the recreation ground. Once we have planning permission for these we will be able to start applying for grants from various bodies to cover the costs.

Both Bob West and Tom Bindoff have now left the Parish Council, but we thank them for the excellent job they have done for the Operations Committee over the past few years.

Strategy Committee Chair's Report 2018-19

This year has been a busy year for the strategy committee. We increased the frequency of meetings from quarterly to monthly to deal with the increased number of projects that have arisen from the neighbourhood plan work and to ensure the committee is proactively driving the work of the council.

We undertook a review of the council's committee structure and terms of reference resulting in a few changes to the way certain committees report into Council in an effort to increase timeliness of decision making. The main changes were to create a Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Board (NPAB) that reports into the Planning Committee to advise on how applications brought before the committee fit within the made neighbourhood plan. We also created a new Allotments committee to give greater support to plot holders and clearer guidance on the governance of the allotment garden off Love Lane. This sub-committee reports into Operations Committee. The Pavilion & Sports Field sub-committee also now reports into Operations Committee.

We also took the opportunity to review and update several of the Council's governance documents and policies. We adopted a number of new policies throughout the year including an equality & diversity policy, grant awarding policy, health, safety & wellbeing policy and lone working policy. A full list is available on our website watlington.org.

We also migrated to a new website provider and simplified the navigation around our site. Hopefully you find the new site easy to use and informative. A particular highlight is the events page which provides a free community calendar that any individual, community group or local business can use to publicise their events. It is a one-stop shop for what's going on in Watlington. The website upgrade forms a significant part of our new Communications Strategy. The vision behind the communications strategy is that our residents will know what services the Council provides and the quality of service they can expect from us, feel confident and satisfied with our services, and their costs and understand how to get involved with, or influence, our work. In addition, visitors to the town will see Watlington as a top destination to live, work and play.

We reviewed the parking arrangements in Hill Road carpark in consultation with the Watlington Business Association. A number of recommendations were put forward including a 3-month enforcement trial, but this was voted down by the committee as was a recommendation to install security cameras in the car park. The recommendation to improve signage and increase the number of marked 2-hour bays was approved, however, and has been passed to Operations committee to implement.

Correspondence with Oxfordshire County Council is still ongoing with regards to the transfer of the Charlotte Coxe Trust to the guardianship of the Parish Council. An interim committee has been formed to oversee the transfer process and begin preparations for the constitution of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to manage the trust going forward.

We have responded to numerous consultations in the past 12 months including the SODC Local Plan and Oxfordshire Plan (formerly known as the Joint Spatial Strategic Plan). We also agreed strong objections to the Oxford-Cambridge expressway as currently proposed due to the lack of a Strategic Environmental Assessment and any meaningful public consultation on the route.

For me, as Chair of the Strategy committee for the past 12 months and a committed environmentalist, the achievement I am most proud of is the declaration of a climate emergency almost a full two months ahead of the Government doing the same. This precedes the formation of

the energetic and engaging Watlington Climate Action Facebook group, which at the time of writing has amassed over 200 members in just two short weeks. The strength of feeling in this group shows just how willing Watlington is to play our part in tackling the climate crisis and I extremely proud to have led the strategy committee through this critical period.

Another highlight is the inaugural Community & Voluntary Fair & Awards which are being held on the 8th June at The Watlington Club. We have received lots of nominations for the six award categories and there is still time to get your last-minute nominations in if you have not done so already. Nominations close on the 24th May (tomorrow if you are reading this at the Annual Parish Meeting!).

Stephanie Van de Pette – Chair of Strategy

May 2019

Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Board

Report for the Watlington Annual Parish Meeting:

The Parish Council set up the Board following the successful outcome of the Referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan in June 2018 and the adoption of the Plan by SODC in the following August. The Neighbourhood Plan Forum had completed its work and was replaced by the Advisory Board to assist in the delivery of the Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan is now the key strategic planning document guiding the Parish Council's work and the task of the Board is to provide information and evidence to support the Council's decision-making process. The Board has a mixed membership of parish councillors and community volunteers (in the first instance these are members of the previous Neighbourhood Plan Forum Coordination Group).

The working groups which had contributed to the Neighbourhood Plan are still in place and are now linked to the Advisory Board. Both the Traffic Group and the Environment Group have been active in the past six months. The Traffic Group looked at options for improvements linked to the construction of the edge road and schemes were suggested to the Parish Council. These were adopted for further discussion with the County Council. The Environment Group met a representative of the Environment Agency to discuss strategies to protect the chalk stream along Cuxham Road and to create a wild area in the flood zone which is part of the Pig Farm development site. The Parish Council will use this information when details of the planning application on the site are discussed with SODC.

The Board aims to keep up to date on the infrastructure which will be needed as Watlington grows. It has had meetings with the County Council about the provision of primary and secondary school places in Watlington as the new developments are built and is looking at the rising demand for early years education as more families move into the town. It has also met the Rector and Church Wardens at St Leonard's to discuss their proposals for increasing community use of the Church. A meeting was set up for parish councillors with Ruth Cross, the Leisure Development Officer at SODC, to discuss future provision for sports and recreation.

A key function of the Board is to keep up to date on housing development proposals and the provision of the edge road. Contact with SODC planning officers and developers is ongoing. A meeting for parish councillors was arranged in January with Jason Sherwood and a team from OCC Highways to discuss proposals for key sections of the edge road, possible timescales for construction and agreements with developers about planning conditions to restrict the number of new homes which can be built before the edge road is fully in use. A presentation by Providence Land of the master plan for the housing sites next to Marlbrook and Pyrton Lane was also arranged for the parish council in advance of the planning application being made to SODC.

The Board is in the process of gathering evidence on a number of issues which often link with work being done by other groups within the community. Current research includes environmental issues including the protection of trees in the parish and the possibility of installing renewable energy projects. A list of projects is being drawn up which could be funded by some of the Community Infrastructure Levy which Watlington will receive when housing development is started.

Report by Gill Bindoff, Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Board
May 2019.

Allotments Sub-Committee

Thank you to those who have helped through the year with the upkeep of the track i.e. Grass cutting and filling holes etc. We also thanks those who have trimmed back the hedges etc. and helped with the coppicing of the hazels

You should have noticed that a new gate post has been fitted at the Nursery end of the track enabling the gate to be shut easily. All the Taps and Troughs have been checked – and are all fully serviceable – water is an expensive commodity for us please use wisely.

Hopefully the notice boards will be installed soon.

Rent: This year's rent (Details held at the Parish Office) was increased by £1

As of the date of this Notice

- 1 person was refused a renewal of tenancy for their Plot due to lack of Cultivation and care
- 6 People have not renewed their Tenancy
- 4 of those plots are now re let

The Watlington Allotments Facebook group currently has 32 members and is an easy and quick way to Ask & Tell almost anything Allotment related.

I currently am aware of 60 members with email addresses - that's about 60% of allotmenters – it's quicker than post. Please contact the Parish Office if you wish to be added to the email list.

George Bruce – Chairman Robert Rogers – Vice-Chairman