

Minutes of the **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING** of Buckingham held in Buckingham Community Centre on Wednesday 26th March at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr. T. Bloomfield
Cllr. J. Harvey
Cllr. P. Hirons
Cllr. R. Newell Town Mayor
Cllr. L. O'Donoghue
Cllr. A. Mahi
Cllr. M. Smith
Cllr. C. Strain-Clark
Cllr. R. Stuchbury
Cllr. M. Try
Cllr. W. Whyte
Cllr. D. Isham
Cllr. T. Mills Buckingham North, AVDC
Cllr. H. Mordue Buckingham South, AVDC
Mr. C. Williams Chief Executive Officer Buckinghamshire County Council

Inspector James Davies Thames Valley Police
Tracey Aldworth Director, AVDC

Other residents:

Mrs C Burgess
Mrs A Beckenham
Mr J Darke
Mrs B Farmer
Mrs J Mordue
Mr R Munday
Mr I Payne Buckingham & Winslow CAB
Mrs K Robins
Mr B Robins
Mrs U Robinson
Mr F Slirbik
Mrs M Szirbik
Mr P Strain-Clark
Mr S Townsend Swan Community Hub
Mrs A White

Non-residents:

Mr D Bratton
Mr J Riches Buckingham Business Club

Also present: Mr. Christopher Wayman Town Clerk
Mr. C. Robson Deputy Town Clerk
Mrs. Claire Bolton Committee Clerk

1. Apologies for absence

RESOLVED to note that apologies were received from Councillor G Collins, Mr. J. Bercow MP, Mr. A. Grant (Chief.Exec., AVDC), Mr. Jon McGinty (Deputy Chief Executive, AVDC), Cllr. M. Tett (Leader, BCC), Cllr. M Rand (Chairman AVDC), Mr. D Hudson Royal Latin School, Mrs. J Harding Buckingham and Winslow CAB, Superintendent G Chiariello Thames Valley Police.

2. To receive and approve the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 22nd March 2013.

The Minutes were approved. There were no matters arising.

3. To receive a report by the Mayor of Buckingham and the Chairmen of the different Committees on the work of Buckingham Town Council

I want to start off by thanking all those who have worked hard for the Council over the past year, this includes Chris Wayman our Town Clerk, who ably heads up our team of staff, ably assisted by Chris Robson our deputy clerk, who has been appointed since our last meeting, and all Councillors but particularly the committee chairs and the willing Councillors who help at the many events we put on. Councillors discuss and agree policy at our weekly meetings but it's the Town Council staff who do all the work in between meetings.

Chris Wayman has been a great help with the Neighbourhood development plan, and so has Sheena, our Town Plan Officer who finishes at the end of this month.

Katharine is a wonderful help and support to the Planning Committee and assists the Mayor in unsung ways preparing robes, writing letters, sending out invitations, and knows how to make things run smoothly, doesn't panic and takes everything in her stride.

But staffing comes under our FAP committee with the Chair of the committee being the lone manager for the Town Clerk, so no more on the staff side as that is under the remit of FAP committee. We started on our business plan and looking at what we wanted to achieve but only half the Councillors attended and we have that to complete under the facilitation of our Town Clerk and Cllr Jon Harvey,

The Council continues to work with many groups in the Town, the Buckingham Society have a representative on our Planning Committee, the Green Buckingham Group, the Buckingham Twinning Association, the Fairtrade steering group, the Buckingham Community Wildlife Project, the Destination Buckingham Group, the Buckingham Economic Group and the Buckingham and Maids Moreton Neighbourhood Action Group. We've worked with MK Dons, businesses, Project Street Life, schools and businesses.

Once again, we were able to book *Play Around the Parishes*, which came to Chandos Park on two occasions, plus once at Grenville School during inclement weather. The first occasion, on 1 August, saw the park playground area crammed to capacity by the time everything had been set up in the glorious sunshine. These events are always well attended by young families and, costs permitting, we look forward to continuing them each year.

Our older youngsters were also provided with a range of fun-filled opportunities to give them something to do during what we hoped at the time would be a long hot summer. Working in partnership with and co-funded by Thames Valley Police, Aylesbury Vale District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council, Buckingham and Maids Moreton Neighbourhood Action Group and Aylesbury Youth Action, we provided:

- Weekly Tag Rugby sessions at Embleton Way
- The Climbing Wall and I-van, also at Embleton Way
- The Youth Space Bus, a regular visitor, was also at Cornwall's Meadow car park during several early evenings, but also accompanied by other activities
- The inflatable Bungee Run, which is always hugely popular, plus other giant games in Bourton Park
- Inflatables, sumo suits, giant games and a space-hopper track at Overn Avenue
- For those living in the north of our town, we had the I-van, giant games and the mobile skate park at Maids Moreton Playing Field
- Finally, during August, we provided weekly wood carving and mural painting sessions in Bourton Park. You can see their handiwork in the re-furnished picnic table by the Bourton Road car park, the new carved "gateway" to the underpass pathway (the path was also re-laid thanks to SITA sponsorship), and the murals on the underside of the by-pass bridge

Our feedback suggests that these were enjoyed by all the youngsters taking part, and we look forward to working with the same partners next year.

For the fourth successive year, we enjoyed a series of football-related events sponsored by the MK Dons football team, culminating in the Buckingham Big Day match against Tranmere Rovers where Buckingham residents could enjoy huge discounts on ticket prices and a special bus to and from Stadium MK. The pre-match events included a children's roadshow at the Royal Latin school and a teenagers' event at Project Street Life – both attended by Dons players. There were also coaching sessions with Moretonville and Preston Gawcott players, and at the University; plus a presentation at Stowe School. The ever-popular Football Forum was hosted again by Buckingham Athletic Football Club; and a reception at Stadium MK for local businesses and traders. The Dons mascots, Donny and Mooie, attended our Christmas Lights switch-on and the Christmas Parade.

Councillor Mike Smith, originally brought the MK Dons to Buckingham and who continues to work with them for our Big Day and its surrounding events, he saw the benefits that such an association could bring to the town.

We continue to receive some funding from AVDC for the *Destination Buckingham Group*, which is tasked with promoting Buckingham as a destination of choice, both for those living in the town and its surrounding villages, and for visitors from farther afield. The Group comprises local trader and business representatives, the Town Council, and other local "movers and shakers".

The Group followed-up its earlier benchmarking study, conducted by Action for Market Towns, with a Visitor Impressions Survey. Findings from the survey that fell within the Group's limited finances have already been put in place, with a new town map at the Verney Close exit from Cornwall's Meadow car park and a currently temporary banner on the side of the Community Centre directing visitors toward the shopping area. This banner will soon be replaced by something more permanent, and the Group is looking to further improve signage within the town centre. The Group continues to support initiatives by the traders and other local groups, including our recent Spring Fair; and has revised and reprinted the visitor leaflet. The www.buckinghamuk.info website has been completely revised and, while still being populated, is well worth a look. The Group Chairman, Councillor Mike Smith, is also in discussion with Bucks Business First about further improving the tourist angle for Buckingham and nearby attractions to the north of, and beyond, the county boundary.

The coming year will see more of the same, but with the addition of a weekend cycle event on 13 or 27 July that will hopefully include some top-level races as well as less ambitious rides and supporting events plenty for the more leisurely cyclist. Our Town Clerk Chris Wayman, himself a keen cyclist, is a major player in the organising of these events with the sport's governing body, British Cycling.

There are some things that happen in Buckingham that are beyond our control, and no matter how good the points we put forward, another authority goes against what we want this happens in planning issues, but also with the introduction of parking charges at the swan pool car park that pushes parking on to already congested nearby roads, and the loss of free parking for the first hour at the Cornwall's meadow car park. We put forward a scheme to Aylesbury Vale as to how this could be worked maintaining the free parking, but they chose to go a different way, and we remain concerned about its effect on people using our town, but it is on trial so do get your comments in to AVDC if you are unhappy about it.

Also the very recent work on the by-pass, that has spoilt that area and demolished the lovely screens of mature trees and shrubs between the traffic and housing, and a year on its still chaos up there and I have concerns for the impact on our remaining trees..

In closing thanks again to our staff, and also to our Councillors who put in many hours on a voluntary basis to try and improve things here in Buckingham. Under the committees there have been lots of achievements and I am sure the committee chairs will mention them to you. It's also my duty to inform you, as full Council decide the precept for BUCKINGHAM that next year's Town Council's element of your Council Tax will remain unchanged for the 4th consecutive year.

3.1 Cllr. Mike Smith, Chair of the Environment & Property Committee

The Town Council's Environment, Property and Health Committee is authorised by the Full Council to take responsibility for the protection and improvement of the town and its environs. We make recommendations to the Full Council regarding any land or property held or leased, and any proposed purchases or sales.

We keep an eye on work required to footpaths, pavements, cycle-ways, roads, waterways, horticultural and arboriculture works, street furniture (seats, planters and waste bins), play areas, and play equipment. A "health" element was added just over a year ago, to promote all aspects of community safety and general "wellbeing" in our town.

Not all of this falls within the Town Council remit, however, so we try to liaise closely with our District and County Council partners on the maintenance of those items for which they have specific responsibility.

The bulk of the Town Council "estate" comprises Chandos and Bourton Parks, the Cemetery (including the house and chapels), the Railway Walk, and other open spaces. Apart from ensuring that these areas are properly maintained, we work closely with local Conservation Volunteers and various "friends" groups whose unstinting work helps to maintain and improve these valuable resources and protect the indigenous wild life.

During the past year, with the diligent efforts of our Green Spaces Manager and his team, we have seen continuing improvements to Bourton Park and our Cemetery. We also undertook an audit of our green spaces to identify where additional work might be needed, and to check access for the less able and those with pushchairs. Our findings are being worked into our comprehensive Park Management Plans, which are currently being reviewed.

In Bourton Park, the long-hoped for replacement Trim Trail will be installed in time for the summer, together with a MUGA on the existing basket-ball court. Following last year's replacement of some picnic benches that were well past their sell-by date, as part of a youth engagement project last summer, a further picnic bench has been repaired, and carved "gate posts" now lead to the re-laid path under the by-pass, where the bridge supports now also have some attractive murals. We continue to look to replacing the otter sculptures

After last year's hiccup over replacing the Chandos Road entrance path to the park, we re-instated our earlier plans and work started earlier this month. We hope you are not too inconvenienced by this.

In the Cemetery, a new Garden of rest is maturing nicely; but lack of available grave space gives continuing cause for concern. Our policy is to retain this as a lawned cemetery, for ease of maintenance purposes, but in the older part of the cemetery our memorial safety testing continues on a planned cycle. General maintenance continues to a high standard. Problems with the East Chapel that were identified last year have now been repaired. The Cemetery Lodge continues to be rented out.

The War Memorial at the parish church also falls under our remit and the base and protective bollards were renewed last year.

We continue to look at providing additional public toilets in the town centre, probably adjacent to the Cornwalls Meadow car park. It is not mandatory for local authorities to provide them, but

there is a clear demand for them from our residents and visitors to the town. We are hopeful of utilising some New Homes Bonus monies, held by AVDC, for this purpose.

Having replaced their Bridge Street play equipment last year, we remain hopeful that AVDC will refurbish their skate park area, which is well used but now looking very tired.

Last year, for the first time we looked at Fuel Poverty in the town, and invited suppliers to indicate what measures may be available for those in difficulty. Responses were slow and some suppliers have yet to respond, but we are continuing to explore the possibilities.

We also agreed in principle to install solar panels on the Community Centre roof, in order to reduce fuel bills and perhaps even recoup some money. Discussions with the Community Centre Management Committee and others continue.

The CCTV cameras in Chandos Park and in the High Street continue deter would-be vandals, but we are still plagued by anti-social behaviour and excessive litter.

Finally, last year I reported that we had hopes of AVDC replacing the existing shelter at the Bus Stand with a larger version, to better accommodate the increased use generated by the X5 service being re-routed through the town. Regrettably, AVDC were unable to do this, although their contractors did manage to scrub it up a bit.

From the foregoing, it will be clear that the Committee has extensive responsibilities and has achieved a lot in the last year or so. As Chairman I am grateful for the hard work of the committee members and of the Green Spaces staff, who together help to make Buckingham a nice place to be.

3.2 Cllr Lisa O'Donoghue, Deputy Chair of the Finance, Administration and Personnel Committee

I wanted to start off this report on a positive note - for the 4th year running your Town Cllr's have agreed a 0% increase in your council tax rates, this means we will deliver the same services as last year, employ the staff, put on the same number – if not more – events, plus take on jobs the County and District Council's have asked us to take over, but this will cost you no more than it did last year and I think this shows we are conscious of providing our residents with value for money, whilst trying to make Buckingham a place that visitors here and overseas want to visit as this brings valuable economy into the town.

One thing that hits our Town Council hard is when the District or County Council decide to pull out of running a service in Buckingham, such as the Tourist Information Centre in the Old Gaol, or the Youth Centre on London Road to name but two. The TiC for example, costs us £25k a year to keep running and this has proven to be a worthwhile investment, as our Town is kept busy and vibrant with visitors, yet we also pay £62k a year to fund the TiC in Aylesbury. One has to wonder who negotiated their package as our Town Clerk obviously got us a fantastic deal.

The Town Council are very proud of our Grants facility, paying out nearly £16k this year to local Charities and groups such as the Youth Centre, the St. Peter & Paul Church Holiday Club, Project Street Life, Dial-A-Ride, the Fibromyalgia Support Group, the CAB and many others, all of which are available to see on our website.

This year we have seen some of our staff move on and I would like to say a massive thank you to the following people;

Anita Simonds who was our Deputy Town Clerk; she updated many of the council's policies, helped me support the Youth Council and was a great asset to her colleagues and the Town Clerk.

Sheena McMurtrie, who was employed for 6 months to work on our Town's Neighbourhood Plan and was invaluable during her service.

Ken Horne who was a wonderful Grounds Team member, he was always seen working hard in the parks, or putting up barriers for events and even when leaving kindly offered to still dig our graves until we found a replacement grave digger.

Louise Bird who did all the admin for the Buckingham Town Matters brochure, which is a task in itself to keep everyone on target for deadlines, Louise also did general admin in the office and will be missed.

I would also like to welcome two new members of staff;

Chris Robson, who is our new Deputy Town Clerk and although a new face to the town he has quickly slotted in and caught up to speed on much of the council's work. Chris is a quick learner by anyone's standard and I hope will be with us for many years to come.

Ian Saunders has been employed to assist with the Grounds Team and outside maintenance and I hope has been made to feel welcome.

Finally, I would like to say that although we have 17 Town Cllr's who sit in meetings every week or more, discussing, deciding and delegating, it's our team in the office who have the hard work to do and without them the Town Council wouldn't function. There are too many to name here tonight and I hope no-one is offended by this group thank-you, but please know you are all worth your weight in gold and valued by each and every one of us.

3.3 Cllr. Paul Hiron, Chairman of the Planning Committee

In the planning world the last year has been a year of changes and, it has to be said, considerable difficulty for the Committee.

Many of these changes are consequent of the greatly reduced budget that AVDC have to operate with, so, for example, comments on planning applications are only considered if a member of this Committee verbally presents, in under 5 minutes, the views of this council to the relevant AVDC committee, meetings which take place in weekday afternoons. It has to be said that these attendances were fruitless as in no cases were the views of the District Council changed by our representations.

Many small housing alterations that used to require applications no longer require them so various house extensions are no longer commented on by us.

The budget cuts also mean that there is now no budget for Conservation Area enforcement and this causes great anguish to this committee when breaches are found and reported, but no action takes place. As we are only the second largest town in the District it sometimes appears as if the cuts hit Buckingham harder than Aylesbury.

However we did review 158 planning applications in the year, compared to 133 last year. The main ones were the two Sainsbury and the ASDA supermarket applications. These inevitably bring up issues of how the viability of the town centre shops (and indeed, the town centre itself) is to be maintained. The University also applied for permission to develop the old Hartridge site as teaching & student accommodation.

It is a matter of sadness to me that we received no applications for new employment buildings, except the out of town retailers, in the year.

The greatest frustration has been with our Neighbourhood Development Plan.

We carried out various consultation events in the town and a reasonable degree of consensus was obtained as to the potential future use of various areas around the town and we were ready to submit the plan to an independent inspector when we were hit by two bombshells.

Firstly the village of Radclive, from which we had obtained written agreement a year ago to have a reserve housing area at the extreme eastern edge of their parish, withdrew that agreement. So this does not greatly affect the plan but it does have to be re-consulted with the new area.

Secondly the AVDC plan was rejected at an early stage by the inspector. It is common for neighbourhood plans to be drawn up in districts that do not have a plan, but now developers are taking a town in Cheshire to the High Court, basically saying that you cannot have a neighbourhood plan unless your district has a development plan. If their submission is accepted we will have to wait at least two years before we can complete our Neighbourhood Plan as this is the earliest that AVDC will be able to have a plan completed.

However none of this could have been completed without the work of our committee clerk, Katharine McElligott, the Town Planning officer Sheena McMurtrie and the Town Clerk who had major input into the Plan. We are grateful for all their work during the year.

3.4 Cllr. Robin Stuchbury, Chairman of the Town Centre and Events Committee

Reported on a very successful year of events, a remit which takes a considerable amount of time and commitment from all staff and Councillors involved. The recent addition of the comedy nights had been a particular personal achievement for both Councillor Stuchbury and the Events Co-ordinator Amanda Brubaker. This event had turned into a firm favourite in the town, with much support from Cllrs Whyte and Strain-Clark in particular.

The Fringe week had evolved over a number of years, run originally in conjunction with AVDC; now during a week in June; in 2014 from 14th – 21st June. This year there would also be a 1940's event in the Community Centre to mark the celebrations of the D-Day landings.

The TC&E Committee also run 2 further music events – Music in the Market and Bandjam, with up to 2000 people coming to attend them. These musical events add great value to the town socially; people often planning their own family calendars around them, ensuring greater attendance.

The Charter fair continued to be an exciting and mostly welcomed event by the towns people, Cllr Stuchbury said he very much enjoyed working with the families who run the fair over the years and thanked all committee members and staff for their work throughout the fair's visit.

The Christmas Parade continued to run successfully with Cllr Mordue taking over from Mr and Mrs Heyward on the Parade Committee; following the Christmas Parade in December the Community Fair continues to run in the Community Centre with the help of Cllrs Bloomfield and Lehmann.

2 river rinses take place in the town annually, always with the help of members of the Stowe Sub Aqua Club, cleaning out the river each year generally turns out something interesting, from a horse's head one year to shopping trolleys and skateboards. A very worthwhile event, having a positive environmental impact; as well as encouraging pride in the town's surroundings.

Buckingham in Bloom was another event adding a sense of value and wellbeing to the community. Cllr Stuchbury hoped to see some new gardens being entered into the competition in 2014. The contracts for the planters and hanging baskets continued each year, maintenance and watering carried out by Town Council staff.

Cllr Stuchbury made final comments drawing the audience's attention to the Town Council's association and funding of the Buckingham Tourist Information Centre – AVDC had withdrawn funding some years ago.

Cllr Stuchbury closed by thanking all Councillors and staff for their commitment and hard work for the Town Centre & Events Committee.

4. To receive presentations from representatives of other entities on their work in 2012/2013

4.1 Buckinghamshire County Council

Mr. C. Williams (Chief.Exec, BCC), thanked the Mayor for the invitation to the meeting and reported on the County Council's work as follows. The County Council covers a population of 510,000 people throughout the county, providing over 100 services for the populous from 'cradle to grave'. Covering a range from the under 2's through school life, to the vulnerable and elderly residents in the County. The County's operational budget was £720 million, with £380m of that going straight to schools. The County Council were in the process of making £85 million of savings, reducing staff levels and property footprint – offices were now just in the tower block in Aylesbury and a new office in High Wycombe. Mr Williams advised the meeting that during the continuing time of austerity measures the next 4 years would not be any better; it would likely be the period of 2020 – 2024 before the public sector saw an improvement. There would be further radical changes to the structure of the council, including services for the elderly and the way in which county provide services for school – services would be provided on behalf of the county, but not necessarily directly by the County Council.

Mr Williams moved on to advise of the forthcoming east/west rail link from Oxford to Milton Keynes, planned to be electrified an open in 2017 with a new station at Winslow; with a branch line to the north from Aylesbury Vale Parkway to Calvert. The County Council were leading on the investment and committing £10 million.

The HS2 link continued to be pushed ahead by Central Government, County Council members were now arguing for the best outcome for the county, by ensuring a 'mitigation blueprint' to lessen the impact on the area.

Mr Williams commented on the bypass works around Buckingham; County as a whole were responsible for over 3.5 thousand kilometres of roads, with a budget of £16 million; there was a possibility of a further £3.5 million coming from central government for further works. Mr Williams stated it would take 50 years to fix all the potholes in the county.

Mr Williams went on to pay tribute to the Buckingham Flood Group, who had carried out works to assist Buckingham in escaping serious flooding in 2013/14. There had been significant flooding in Marlow and Bourne End with a number of Transport for Buckingham staff diverted to those areas to help. The biggest investment by County in Buckingham had been the redevelopment of the Well St day centre – with a budget of £2 million. The Buckingham School had £1.6 million spent on a science lab and student accommodation. Staff from County had also worked extensively with the Town Council on transport issues for the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan. Buckingham Town Council had become the first Town Council to take on delegated services from County in the form of devolved services; to carry out minor works on behalf of the County Council in more efficient and cost effective way than County could provide.

In closing Mr Williams commented on the work of the Local Area Forum, chaired by Cllr Warren Whyte, with an allocated budget from County of £47,000 covering services from an edible woodland project to vehicle activated road signs and youth projects throughout the County. On highway schemes Mr Williams reported that locally elected Members now determine work in their areas identified by those roads most in need, with current projects in line for West St, Bourtonville and the A413 at Lillingstone Lovell, along with the most dangerous potholes in the county.

4.2 Aylesbury Vale District Council

Tracey Aldworth, Director presented the following by way of a slide presentation –

Highlights 2013/4

Improvements to Swan pool with new gym equipment and replacement of synthetic turf pitch
New car parking management arrangements at Swan Pool to help manage the space for users
Free parking introduced at Western Avenue and Stratford Fields and low level charging piloted in Cornwall's Meadow

Not being flooded in Buckingham this year! Special thanks to all involved in the local flood group
Continued operation of shopmobility facility

Contribution of £10k to the Destination Buckingham Group

Over £60k of Community Chest grants and £38k from the New Home Bonus for Buckingham area awarded

More affordable housing at Bridge Street and London Road developments

Work on the Ageing Well project by Lynne Maddocks of AVDC and Simon Garwood of BCC

The Challenges

Dealing with a 48% reduction in Government grant since 2010 - £5.7m less in real terms

Decisions made regarding customer contact centres – discussions about specific timing and arrangements for changes in Buckingham and Winslow are on-going with BCC and other partners including CAB

As soon as the details have been confirmed this will be communicated locally

Constantly changing planning landscape and developing the new Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan

The Opportunities

£3m capital investment to Swan Pool – starting later this year, completion summer 2015

MEPC's involvement and plans for Silverstone

New proposals by Sainsbury's and The University

Additional investment on economic development and plans to secure some more EU funds for rural businesses, including market towns

More affordable housing at key sites to come

4.3 Thames Valley Police

Inspector James Davies reported as follows

Buckingham Police Base has proven to be an excellent move and is much more fit for purpose than the previous station. It is called a Police Base as generally it is not a Station where the public can attend to use front counter facilities. There are interview facilities so while we do not bring prisoners to the Base we can interview suspects – this obviously reduces the amount of time officers spend travelling to Aylesbury.

The Base is staffed by Patrol officers 24 hours a day – these are the officers who respond to 999 calls. In addition there are four Neighbourhood police officers and five PCSOs who are all responsible for dealing with ongoing issues on the area. Buckingham & District is the best staffed team of all my six Neighbourhood teams.

Operations

This has been a busy year for the team at Buckingham, and just a flavour of what they have been doing:

- Town Centre based operation in relation to anti-social behaviour issues, in conjunction with AVDC, ultimately leading to the prosecution and imprisonment of the main protagonists.
- A number of licensing operations; drugs dog, swabbing of licensed premises for drugs, covert operations and high profile patrols including use of the mounted section.
- Two weeks of dedicated rural crime operations – including crime reduction events as well as proactive patrol work.
- Vehicle and Operator Services Agency operations.
- Cross border patrols and assistance with a large warrant executed by Northants.

These are just a small number of operations, in total the team cover about 26 pre-planned operations throughout the year and can be deployed Forcewide if the need arises – e.g. flooding in East Berkshire, high profile football matches, events with potential for public disorder etc.

Performance.

- Violence against the person – this is up 6% on last year (an increase of 7 offences taking us to 133 offences so far this year). Of these crimes we have positively (charge, cautioned etc) dealt with 42% of these crimes.
- Burglary to dwellings – this continues to show an increase of 24%, no surprises as this has been mentioned at the majority of meetings we have been to this year. This is 56 crimes in the last year, mainly in the villages but a spate in the town. We have positively disposed of 19.6% of these crimes. A mixture of travelling criminals as well as local offenders.
- Robbery – There have been no robberies (theft with violence) in the Buckingham & District area this year.
- Theft from Vehicle – This is up 6% (109 offences in total this year).
- Drugs offences – This is down 18%.
- Anti-social behaviour has halved in the last two years.

So in summary there is work to do. The violent offences are representative of a general increase across the police area, and close to half of these crimes in Buckingham & District are domestic related incidents. We need to do more work around burglaries and I would ask that the public/partners understand that things like speed enforcement (which are expensive and generally ineffective) do detract from our work in this area.

5. To receive reports by recipients of 2012/2013 grants over £1000

5.1 Buckingham, Winslow & District Citizen's Advice Bureau

Ian Payne reported on the work of the CAB advising the audience that the organisation was a charity, not government funded and each bureau in its locality was responsible for raising funds

locally; Buckingham CAB was 1 of only 3 that had received an award for volunteering levels, there were approximately 25 regular volunteers. In the last 12 months the CAB had dealt with 4,500 different clients from drop in services, appointments, telephone calls, and home visits. The CAB had had enough funding to also provide a specialist debt advisor and again in the last 12 months had dealt with over £1 million of debt problems. Another major issue locally the CAB had helped to deal with was that of the new disability or PIP benefits, many people had filled in their applications in June 2013, and had still not been advised of assessment of interview dates. Mr Payne encouraged the audience to lobby local MPs on this very poor state of affairs.

The CAB had also noticed a big increase in the number of people struggling to pay fuel bills, but was pleased to finally hear of initiatives from the 'big 6' providers to reduce costs. Those with employment issues, particularly those on zero hours contract had also been helped by the CAB. Mr Payne thanked the Town Council for its support and help in keeping the business of the Citizens Advice Bureau moving forward and providing help for the people of Buckingham, Winslow & District.

5.2 Swan Community Hub

Stephen Townsend advised the audience that the Swan Community Hub had started approximately 4 or 5 years previously, but became a 'virtual' hub following the removal of the premises they had been using. The Swan Community Hub works to link different organisations together in an effort to help them become more successful. A particular recent success had been that of bringing the Credit Union into MK17 and 18. Another scheme they had been involved with was the 'kitkat club', an organisation that exists to feed and entertain school age children, but also encourages parents to take part and learn skills to enable the families to cook and eat well and maintain good standards at home. The hub was also helping was the job club in Buckingham, helping members with letter writing, cv's, interview skills and self-confidence. Mr Townsend stated that 30 members to their knowledge had been helped to get back into work. Mr Townsend finished by thanking the Town Council for its grant which was beneficial to the whole of Buckingham, helping to sustain and maintain a healthy community in partnership with other organisations.

6. Questions from the Residents of Buckingham

6.1 Written questions

Mrs Una Robinson – 20 Wharfside Place, Buckingham.

The state of the only footpath into Buckingham on the Stratford Rd between Mary Mcmanus Drive and Northand, opposite BP, Paragon and Wharf House. Many of the problems occur when the developer of the cottages failed to reinstate the pavement and was no made to. Points of concern –

- 1. HGV's entering and leaving Wharf Yard, some mounting pavements*
- 2. Leaking water meter at no 12*
- 3. 30 speed limit sign not replaced after resurfacing*
- 4. Gully ending at number 16 blocked grill soak away*
- 5. With proposed X5 route using Stratford Rd for journey in and out to bus bay and longer vehicles causing more traffic volume*
- 6. Puddle between 16 & 17 entry spreads right across path*
- 7. Sink hole from 2013 beginning to sink again*
- 8. Wheelie bins left out all week*
- 9. Blocked frill drain at number 18 downpipe*
- 10. Rough patches on pavement*

Will these issues be resolved in this Council tax year or 2014/15? Pedestrians need a safe walk way as do parents with buggies and those who use mobility aids.

Having tried at differing times to get these matter put right, failure has been the result of 'not our department' or 'try....' Have been the response or 'I will call back later'.

With IT and other modern technology it should be possible for these 10 matters to be put right in a day or two. If a JOINED UP service could be provided. I look forward to a safe and hazard free walk into Buckingham and a written response to my 10 points.

The Town Clerk advised no written response to the above had yet been received, but the Town Council would pass on to the relevant officer.

Maureen Szirbik – 1 Orchard Dene, Buckingham

I hope I am not too late to voice my concerns of parking on grass verges in the area of Moreton road, a delivery van parks every tuesday on the main road in the town near the turning to the main car park causing a problem for traffic and buses

On being asked for clarification, as the main car park is not on Moreton Road

The grass verge area is the junction of Addington road and Moreton road it has to be a large vehicle that parks there

Due to the deep tyre impressions on the grass it is very ugly and unsightly.

The area where the van parks is opposite shops and the Dental surgery near the pedestrian crossing on the high street just before the turning to

Cornwalls Meadow car park I hope I have explained the situation more clearly

Mr Chris Williams, Buckinghamshire County Council responded following the meeting – Officer response is from Anne James, Network Resilience Manager, Transport for Bucks

Addington Rd J/W Moreton Rd

Having checked on google maps there are double yellow lines on the road so we can enforce. I will ask NSL to send someone round

Basically if there are restrictions and the footway is part of the highway extent then the restrictions cover the footway as well as the carriageway and we can enforce. Please let them know to contact NSL if they have an issue of this kind. NSL's phone number is 08432085544 (option 2 for enforcement requests).

High Street J/W Cornwalls Meadow

Lines are there and I know this is on NSLs beat and they do issue PCNs regularly along there.

Mrs P Prout – 8 Wittmills Oak, Buckingham -I would like to ask the question of Aylesbury VD Council

- 1. Why was planning consent given to my neighbour at 10, Wittmills Oak, to put a wall up between the two driveways on some of my land and in a road that has an open plan aspect, and on properties that have a deed of covenant.*
- 2. Why was no planning notice put up outside and why was it not escalated and thereby given the chance to object.*

Written responses from Mr J Bryne, Head of Planning, AVDC
19th March

I have now had the chance to look into this and whilst it is a matter I would have thought better dealt with in private correspondence between the questioner and ourselves however as it has been raised with you as a public question I would respond as follows:

The application was for a single storey rear extension. A 1 metre high wall on the side front boundary with an adjoining property is shown on the plans but did not form part of the description of development as it does not need planning permission from us under the

national permitted development rules. If the wall is on land owned by a neighbour No 8 then that is a civil matter as is the deed of covenant.

Our records show that the site notice was posted on the site frontage.

A number of my staff have spoken to the person raising these concerns and we have also had similar correspondence direct. If it is believed that something is being built that exceeds the permitted development limits then we will investigate the matter.

I trust this will allow you to respond appropriately to the correspondence you have received.

19th March

Just to clarify the previous comments – the wall can be built without needing planning permission from us under the normal national planning legislation. It was not part of the application for the extension and did not need to be. There are no planning requirements under this legislation that bricks match.

Planning controls are entirely separate from covenants on the land or any other such restrictions. Development, whether built as “permitted development” under the national planning legislation or with a grant of permission from us, does not override any such controls but it is between the relevant landowners to resolve any such issues – the Council cannot intervene in covenant, boundary or land ownership/encroachment matters.

I trust this makes the position clear.

19th March

We are separately looking into whether there are any breaches of control on the site as a result of Mrs Prout’s separate contact with us direct, but again restrictions on the deeds (covenants) and planning conditions withdrawing PD, are two totally separate things. I will forward your e-mail on to my staff that are looking into the possibility of a breach of control, but it really does reinforce the point that this level of property and neighbour specific detail is best dealt with by correspondence between us and Mrs Prout and not exchanges at a public meeting.

Mrs B Farmer Heartland/ Bourton Park

Would it be possible to have street lighting from Moorhen Way to the bridge leading to the car park.

Also, could some of the bank be cleared in the park so that you can see the river in some places which runs alongside Linden Village.

Response Neil Passmore AVDC

Thank you for your e-mail.

We don’t have any plans to light this section of footpath, this has been raised before. This would be an expensive project we don’t have any budget for, as there is an alternative route this is not a priority

There are no plans to open up the river bank on the Heartlands side, as the Linden Village side is cut short, this side is an important habitat for wildlife.

If you have any further questions please contact me

From the Floor

Mrs Beckenham, Wharfeside Place

Representing residents and on behalf of a petition signed by 33 people last year about the situation with traffic on the London Rd. Mrs Beckenham stated that it was very difficult for the elderly and young mothers with pushchairs to cross the road when traffic appeared to be exceeding 50mph and not sticking to the legal 30mph for the road. Mrs Beckenham said she could not understand why the Council was talking about putting solar panels on the Community Centre when she repeatedly got the answer from organisations there was no funding to address

the matter on the London Rd. Mrs Beckenham said she had been in correspondence with John Bercow MP, Transport for Buckingham and Cllr Warren Whyte on the issue.

Cllr Whyte responded as a Councillor for the ward. He would write to Mrs Beckenham and reported that as of 25th March data collected by speeding strips on the highway had given no viable proof of persistent speeding. There had been only occasional speeding before 7am in the morning and late in the evening. The County Council spend of £1200 had been used to investigate the situation. Cllr Whyte also advised that the motor vehicle activated signs would be positioned in the area and Transport for Buckingham would be making checks.

Mrs K Robins – Chandos Rd and the Buckingham Society

Mrs Robins asked about the land behind 13 High St – complaining that it was full of old rubbish and the orchard there was in a terrible state.

The Town Clerk responded that the Town Council's Planning Committee were looking into and trying to ascertain the ownership of the land; with a view to ensuring the rubbish was cleared and the land looked after in a proper manner.

Mrs Robins also raised the issue of the existing bus shelter in the Cattle pen area of the High St, expressing concern at the poor accessibility for people with mobility issues, and the traffic difficulties due to the need for a wider turning circle.

Cllr Stuchbury informed the audience that he had recently attended the transport users group with Cllr Harvey where the issue had been discussed, and said that the District Council had not fulfilled their promise to replace the bus shelter.

James Darke – 17 Winslow Rd

Mr Darke questioned what actions would be taken in preserving the Customer Service Centre in Verney Close from closing.

Cllr Stuchbury advised that the motion had gone to cabinet, and whilst he opposed the closure, the decision was taken by Aylesbury Vale District Council to close the service centre. The County Council would be maintaining a presence for 12 months.

Cllr Mordue – District Cabinet for Leisure – responded that the area office would be closing as people were not using the service. A variety of different ways were now being used to communicate with AVDC, not just in person – those of internet, email, telephone; the District Council could no longer afford to have receptionists waiting for the few people who came in on foot.

Cllr Mordue also went on to inform the audience of the forthcoming improvements to be made to the Swan Pool complex by using funding of £500,000 from Sports England and S106 funds; but reminding the audience that S106 money received by the District had to be considered for use over 36 parishes.

Cllr T Mills spoke in a private capacity

Cllr Mills questioned Mr Williams about his statement that it would effectively be a 50 year period before the cycle of pothole repairs would be completed; asking whether Mr Williams was saying there was little hope of repairs on minor roads.

Mr Williams responded that some had been in existence a long time, but that local members were now nominating the worst problem areas in their wards. Mr Williams did confirm that there was a formal plan for structural maintenance and repairs, but that it was a balance between potholes and more serious structural problems.

Mr D Bratten – St Albans Rd Winslow

Mr Bratten reported on a large pothole on the road from Padbury to Buckingham in 2013 which had caused damage to a number of vehicles, including his own. He was still awaiting compensation.

Mr Williams confirmed that there was a target of fixing the most serious potholes within a 24 hour period from first report; Mr Williams assured Mr Bratten that the Council would settle a claim if it was found to be valid.

7. Mayor’s points for information

The Mayor then thanked everyone for coming, and invited the audience to attend any of the public sessions before a Town Council meeting to raise any pertinent issues.

The Meeting finished at 9.40pm.

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Chairman of Buckingham Town Council

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Date