

Wingrave with Rowsham Parish Council Meeting 8th July 2014

1. Report on Open Meeting with the Parishes at AVDC 24th June 2014

The meeting was held at AVDC offices and was hosted by AVDC Councillors and Officers. From the floor there were three issues raised by the Parishes:-

- Superfast Broadband
- Verge Mowing/Cutting and the BCC proposals
- The new AVDC plan and Neighbourhood Plans

Superfast Broadband

The discussions on Superfast Broadband centred on the relatively slow roll out of the Superfast project and how important Superfast was for rural businesses, home workers and SMEs. There were also comments about the need for higher upload speeds for businesses and the current Superfast project would really only benefit domestic broadband users who require fast download speeds for applications such as on-demand TV. AVDC reported that they were investigating funding opportunities (including EU) to progress the Fibre Optic broadband roll out to including some fibre to the premises installations. It was reported that even if they were successful this could be some time away.

Verge Mowing/Cutting

The discussions on Verge Mowing and Cutting were much more “heated” than those on Broadband. There was much complaint about the standard of work undertaken by BCC contractors and the BCC proposal for delegated responsibility. The only Parish that was happy with the BCC proposal was Stewkley Parish. There was considerable angst with the whole proposal. Jon McGinty Deputy Chief Executive reported that previously he had held responsibility for mowing for BCC and VAHT and had managed it on behalf of AVDC, BCC and VAHT, he still has responsibility for AVDC mowing but BCC and VAHT had taken the mowing back ‘in house’ as they believed that they could do it cheaper. The funds offered by BCC to the Parishes will go down year on year and with the likely future cap on Parish precept we will have some difficulties that need to be considered. If the Parishes do take on the BCC proposal, at some time in the future, the Parishes will have to stop a currently funded activity, or at least cut back funding in order to continue with the delegated BCC responsibility. McGinty offered to investigate and provide a map to Parish Clerks of where responsibilities for mowing lay in each parish, ie Parish responsibility, AVDC, BCC & VAHT responsibility, he also said he would approach BCC and VAHT to see if there was any opportunity for AVDC to take back responsibility for these matters.

New AVDC Plan and Neighbourhood Plans

This part of the meeting started with a review as to why the Vale of Aylesbury Plan was withdrawn on the Independent Inspectors recommendation. AVDC Councillors “explained” the background from their perspective. That is the inspector did not accept their strategy for dealing with housing demands from neighbouring Councils and Districts, which was to wait for 18 months until figures could be confirmed. A lot of Parishes raised questions on the new AVDC plan and its impact on Neighbourhood Plans and how to deal with developers in the period till the new plan is approved.

At Stoke Hammond a developer has gained approval for a 40 house development on appeal. AVDC raised a number of objections to the development and all but one was upheld. The loophole the developer exploited was the lack of an AVDC five year housing supply plan. As a consequence AVDC have hurriedly prepared one. One Parish on the outskirts of Milton Keynes on the Buckingham road reported that a developer has put in an application for 3000 homes. AVDC reported that the new plan is now forecast to be approved in 2017. AVDC reported, with some concern, that they were being pushed to accept housing developments from Luton/Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, High Wycombe and London Overspill. Neil Blake the Council Leader reported that he believed that to get its new plan approved AVDC would have to accept twice the number of new homes by 2031 than were in the withdrawn plan. If existing approvals were included there were a total of ~13,500 homes in the withdrawn plan. Neil Blake was explicit that he thought that a minimum of 27,000 new homes would be required and he advised that parishes should plan for double the number of homes than were envisaged in the old plan. In a subsequent conversation he advised parishes to prepare their Neighbourhood Plans on that basis. There was some discussion on Infrastructure requirements for new developments. AVDC reported two conflicting requirements. They have been advised that Infrastructure requirements arising out of new developments should be paid for by the developer but on the other hand they should not make such infrastructure demands of developers as to make developments financially unattractive. Further discussion took place on employment. There was concern about housing without employment. This raised discussion about employment developments at Silverstone Race Track that are within AVDC and the potential for employment around Winslow with the East West Rail link. The need to encourage home workers and SMEs was discussed. (This matter was raised a number of times in the meeting.) The meeting wound up with further informal discussions with Councillors and Officers.

Dr Les Kennedy July 5th 2014