

Minutes of the proceedings of Annual Parish Assembly of Valley Park Parish Council held on Monday 13 May 2013 at 7.40pm at the Knightwood Leisure Centre Valley Park

Present: Councillor A Dowden (Chairman) and Councillors, Mrs J Adey, Mrs P Mukherjee Goodchild, R Bryan, Mrs L Farley and Mrs K Tilling.

Apologies for absence: Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Anderson, A Beesley and Ms J Snow.

Action

1 Chairman's Report

Councillor A Dowden reported upon another successful year for the Parish Council: see Appendix A for report.

2 County Councillor's Report

County Councillor A Dowden's annual report is attached at Appendix B

3 Borough Councillor's Report

TVBC Councillor Kath Tilling presented the Borough Councillor report and is attached at Appendix C.

4 Open Period

Two members of the public attended the meeting, Mr and Mrs Yates. Mrs Yates was the manager of the Mullberry pre-school play group and raised the issue of the play group currently operating at the Valley Park Community Centre which made other uses at the centre extremely limited. She mentioned the possibility of the play group being moved to one of the local infant schools thus freeing up time at the Community Centre for other much needed use by Valley Park residents. Members supported this approach and suggested that she arrange a meeting with the local head mistress and Councillors Mrs Farley and Mrs Tilling to discuss this further.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm

Valley Park Parish Council Chairman's Report

The Parish Council has achieved a great deal throughout 2012/2013.

- Over the last six years the Parish Council has reduced its element of the Council Tax by a total of 16%. It is still the lowest in Test Valley.
- In conjunction with Hampshire County Council, Accredited Community Safety Officers continue to patrol Valley Park supported by Test Valley Borough Council wardens.
- Two new bus shelters have been installed. One in Knightwood Road and the other in Templars Way. There are now 16 bus shelters in Valley Park.
- New fencing was installed on Skyswood Road.
- A resident from the Leven Close/ Crummock Road recently asked if a seat could be provided on the open space land at the rear of Tweed Close. I contacted Test Valley Borough Council and following some gentle persuasion officers agreed to install the seat at this location. The resident concerned was very pleased with the result and with the way they had been involved in deciding where to place it. The seat has proved to be very popular and is frequently in use.
- A new dog bin had been installed on the footpath leading from Catmint Close to Bellflower Way Valley Park
- Situated near the Knightwood Leisure Centre, the surface area of the young children's play area will be improved shortly by Test Valley Borough Council. This is to prevent the muddy conditions that prevent young children using this facility in wet weather conditions. This summer we will have the new BMX track built to national standards at the Knightwood Leisure Centre complex. Work will start on site on 3 June 2013 and will last for eight weeks.
- Work commenced in March on the extension of the cycleway on Baddesley Road from Flexford Bridge to North Millers Dale, extending to provide a safe route to the Hiltingbury / Hursley Road crossroads.
- The Parish Council has responded and assisted residents to respond, to TVBC's Local Plan consultation document.
- The Parish Council would like to thank Hampshire police for its support in helping to keep crime levels low compared to other areas. Members of the

public can verify this by logging into innovative crime mapping website www.crimereports.co.uk

- The Parish Council wishes to thank Test Valley Leisure Department for the work it carries out in the woodlands.
- The Council also acknowledges the valuable contribution from the volunteers of the ' Friends of the Park' team who carry out various projects in the open areas and woodlands of Valley Park.
- I would like to thank local businesses who have supported the community through sponsorship of the parish council local projects eg. Floral displays and planting bulbs.
- Valley Park Parish Council has once again won a Silver award in the Test Valley in Bloom competition and in addition, was awarded the "Baverstock Trophy" for its community work with local children in relation to the floral displays and bulb planting.
- The Council will provide floral displays again this year and this years Valley Park in Bloom will be launched by Lawrie McMenemy on June 5th at 10.30am, with children from St Francis & Knightwood Primary schools
- The Knightwood Youth Club continues to flourish at the Leisure Centre on Friday evenings. The parish council financially assists the experienced HCC Youth Worker , who is supported by local volunteers
- Various local organisations have been supported with Parish Council grants.
- I would like to thank my parish clerk Andrew Purr and all my parish councillors who are unpaid for the work they do in serving the community and keeping Valley Park a very special place in which to live.

Cllr Alan Dowden

2013 Baddesley division County Councillors Report

I was first elected to represent the Baddesley division as the County Councillor in January 1992 . My long experience at the three levels of local government has enabled me to get things done and helped me work successfully for all my constituents in Ampfield, Braishfield, North Baddesley and Valley Park .

Further reductions in grant settlements were announced by the coalition government in the Autumn 2012 statement and the overall financial position of the County Council for the foreseeable future will be even more difficult. The County Council have put in place an ambitious programme of cost reduction and efficiency measures to bring about savings of £97 million of the targeted £100 million. The County Council will utilise their Grant Equalisation Reserve to help balance the budget over the next two years.

It is good news though that I can report, that the County Council's Council Tax will once again be frozen and will remain at £1037.88p for a Band "D" property. All political groups supported this position that there should be no increase.

As the Adult Social Care Spokesperson I scrutinise and monitor the budget carefully and work closely with the administrations Executive Member in order to secure a balanced budget for the department.

I was deeply concerned by the situation of those vulnerable individuals who required two carers to assist them to remain in their own home. They were being charged double amounts of money for their care. I felt that this clearly was an extra tax on disability and I highlighted it and spoke to the Executive Members in regards of this anomaly.

I was grateful when the administration listened and then acted to change the situation at the following Full Council.

In the 2013/14 Adult Social Care budget there is an additional £11 million allocated to tackle the rising demand for services from an increasing elderly and frail population.

At the Full Council in November 2012 I placed a motion on "The Future of Social Care" pressing the government to bring forwarded legislation for urgent reform of the social care system. It gained unanimous support. At a time when finances are so tight finding the right solution is a huge challenge, but early this year the coalition government have announced some changes that they intend to introduce later in 2016. The key reforms will be:

- A cap of £75K on the amount anyone will have to pay for their care.
- A massive increase in the means tested threshold from £23,250 to £123,000.

This means that more people with modest wealth will get help from the state with the costs of their care. Whilst the measures proposed are not perfect, when these changes are introduced they will be fairer, simpler and more sustainable than the current system.

The grant available for voluntary organisations in 2013/14 was oversubscribed by £600K and many voluntary groups will have had their funding cut by 40% with some being denied funding. I did argue for extra grant funding for the voluntary organisations on the basis that voluntary groups provide excellent value for money to the Hampshire Council Tax payer and should be fully supported and valued, if we are to encourage more volunteering. This time the administration did not support the request and some organisations may fold as a result of these cuts..

As a retired Investment Analyst I have enjoyed being an active member of the Hampshire Pension Fund panel. Over the last few years the fund has grown significantly and the value of the funds invested now amount to £4.1 billion. The challenge is, for the panel to choose the correct fund managers and the areas in which they would like the funds invested. The Panel constantly scrutinise and monitor their investment decisions, in order to gain the maximum returns for the pension scheme. With the economic uncertainty it has not been an easy task in recent times. However, most of the fund managers we have selected have made excellent choices in their investment decisions.

My County Council Community Allowance of £13K has supported grant donations to local voluntary organisations and sports clubs within my Baddesley division.

Highway improvements are an ongoing requirement. With an ever decreasing pot of funding it is a battle against other councillor's demands, to secure improvements throughout my division. I am pleased I have been able to secure large amounts of funding for major improvements to Knightwood Road and the extension to the cycleway along Baddesley Road, Ampfield from the Flexford Road Bridge to the junction with Millars Dale . From this point there will be a signed on – road cycle route going along North Millars Dale , Ashbridge Rise and Vanburgh Way before connecting with the Baddesley Road/ Hursley Road junction via the existing footpath between Vanburgh Way and Hursley Road.

I am delighted that out of the six schools within my division, three have been rated by Ofsted as 'Outstanding' with two that are Good and Improving. I serve as a school governor at two local primary schools within my division.

This year there are County elections in May and I hope that I will have the opportunity to continue to serve the best interests of all constituents of the Baddesley division.

HCC Cllr. Alan Dowden

**Valley Park Annual Parish Assembly
Report from the Borough Councillors**

The last year has been a particularly busy one for Borough Councillors Andrew Beesley, Alan Dowden and Kath Tilling. In addition to responding to issues raised by local residents, they have represented the ward on a number of Test Valley Borough Council committees, including Planning, Licensing and Scrutiny, and have been engaged in several critical decisions and debates involving the full Council of 48 members.

They fought vigorously against the closure and subsequent selling-off of the Council Offices in Duttons Road, Romsey, and the proposal to raise the TVBC Council Tax precept by 4.1%; however, despite strong support from other Councillors, they failed to overturn the Cabinet's recommendations in both cases. More successful were proposals put forward by Councillor Tilling, the Scrutiny Lead Member for Environment Issues, for a public awareness campaign to increase recycling rates (and hence income to the Council) and for the adoption of a Council policy to enforce responsible dog ownership, including the control of barking, fouling and dangerous behaviour. These initiatives, brought to prominence by Valley Park residents, will be launched Borough-wide later this year.

The Councillors also continue to represent Valley Park's interests in the development of Test Valley Borough Council's Local Plan. As a direct consequence of Cllr Dowden's involvement on the Plans Panel, there are no new proposals for house-building in Valley Park and areas of public open space and woodland are to be preserved. Also retained are the local gaps separating Valley Park from the settlements of North Baddesley, Chilworth and Ampfield . The Local Plan, which is a re-working of the former Core Strategy, has recently been put out to public consultation. There will be a second round of public consultation later this year and the document will require approval from a Government Inspector before it can be adopted formally. This is unlikely to take place before the summer of 2014.

The Community Development Project, announced last year, has made good progress. A ward profile for Valley Park is now complete and accessible on the TVBC website www.testvalley.gov.uk. Councillors have also conducted a survey of residents' development priorities which has shown that high importance should be attached to schemes which enhance the attractiveness of the area or which provide additional recreational activity for the community. The next stage is to develop some detailed proposals and undertake further local consultation. Test Valley Borough Council has made available a modest ward-based budget to support the realisation of these projects, details of which can also be found on their website.

For further information on these issues, or if you would like to comment, please write to the Borough Councillors:

Cllr Andrew Beesley abeesley@testvalley.gov.uk
Cllr Alan Dowden adowden@testvalley.gov.uk
Cllr Kath Tilling ktilling@testvalley.gov.uk

