

# Voice



Gerrards Cross  
Parish Council Newsletter  
June 2014

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## A Fun Day Out

Sunday, May 11, was a grey, windy day but East Common was alive with coloured marquees, refreshment stalls and bouncy castles. Dominic Grieve, MP opened the Fun Run at 11.30 and over 1,200 runners of all ages were let loose at mid-day on the 5km course from the Memorial Centre around East Common and nearby residential roads.

A team of volunteers monitored the route. Children aged between 4 and 9 had their own races on the Common and four student bands from Chalfont Community College performed a range of music from mid-day until 4pm.

There were a number of families running together as well as teams of friends and work colleagues. There were also quite a few four legged participants - one dog even sporting his own official GX Fun Run T shirt.

The Fun Run is a fantastic fund-raising event and this year's charities were Kids In Sport, based in High Wycombe, and Home-Start in Slough. Anita Mitton, the Assistant Parish Clerk, managed to run the course in a respectable time and uphold the honour of the Parish Council!



The race was won by Chris Oddy at a time of 17 minutes 19 secs. Other runners among the first to finish were teams from Gayhurst School and B.P. Collins, Solicitors.

So, don't miss out. The next GX Fun Run will be in two years so plenty of time to get in training and take part!

See website [www.gxfunrun.org.uk](http://www.gxfunrun.org.uk)



Anita Mitton, Assistant Clerk to the Parish Council, ready for the Fun Run as No 1

### Sponsors were:

Fairweather Insurance  
Aztec Group  
BP Collins  
Brampton Partnership  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Clancy Docwra  
CVC  
Nunn Hayward  
Roberts Newby  
South Bucks District Council

Spire Healthcare  
Stoke Park Club  
The Kitchen Company  
Traveltime  
Alan Wright  
GX Lawn Tennis Club  
H P Jungs  
Tesco Gerrards Cross  
Apex Sports  
Bates Removals

Better Leisure  
Buckingham House Care Home  
Fullers  
The Marquee Company  
Waitrose Gerrards Cross  
Graysheen Garage  
The Ethorpe Hotel  
Rotary Club  
Wildwood Restaurant

## Highways Update

### Traffic Lights on Packhorse Road

Tesco's Manager – James Lingard has confirmed, at the APM, that Tesco's will pay a percentage of the costs for the alterations to the traffic lights on Packhorse Road, although a date for this has yet to be decided.

### Bridge at Mill Lane – Positive News

There have been concerns for many years with the danger to pedestrians at the bridge at Mill Lane. With numerous accidents and near misses the parish have been ploughing on to find a solution. At last there is some positive news. BCC have surveyed the area and have agreed that the alterations in road markings are appropriate although no date is fixed for the work to be done yet; and they are approving the positioning of the posts for the flashing pedestrian signs. The Parish Council feel this is a step in the right direction and are optimistic about the outcome.

### A40 Pedestrian Crossing – a Job Well Done

Since the installation of the Toucan Crossing at The A40 Oxford Road - Packhorse Road intersection, the flow of traffic has much improved and pedestrians can now cross safely. We are pleased to announce that the general consensus has been extremely positive and we can all now benefit from a job well done.



## Frances Chidell, new Editor

Readers owe a big debt of thanks to Madeleine May who has gallantly edited Voice for the past seven years.

I have been asked to succeed her in the job and would be glad to receive any news items relevant to the Parish.

After a lifetime in journalism I joined local newspapers and retired as Features Editor of the Buckinghamshire Advertiser and the Slough Express groups.

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# Work of the Parish Council

**Diana Hepburn-Park, the Parish Clerk and Anita Mitton, Assistant Clerk, describe their work in the Parish Council office on East Common (situated in the car park of the Memorial Centre). The office is open on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9.30am – 1pm.**

The tasks of the Parish Clerk are many and varied but here are a few examples:- answering emails, correspondence and telephone enquiries from residents, preparing agendas and minutes for the Council committee meetings, showing residents copies of planning applications submitted in our Parish (please call us before you visit so that you can ensure that the plan you want to see is available!) and writing to owners of properties requesting that they cut back overgrown hedges that are causing obstructions.

The Clerk also co-ordinates maintenance work on East and West Common such as grass cutting, repair and upkeep of benches and play equipment, cutting back dangerous trees or branches from footpaths.

With regard to Highways matters, please call or email the office if a streetlight near your property is not working or has been damaged. The Clerk will then arrange for our contractor to attend and carry out repairs. If you wish to report a pothole in the road, please contact Bucks County Council at [www.bucksc.gov.uk](http://www.bucksc.gov.uk) as they have responsibility for road repairs.

We hope that this gives you a flavour of what we do. We are always happy to speak to residents and help with issues of local concern or answer your questions. We are here to help!



*Anita Mitton and Diana Hepburn-Park*



*Chris Brown, chairman, with (left) Vivien Franks and (right) Jenny Gordon. The ladies had been presented with flowers for helping to provide refreshments of the annual meeting of the Parish Council held on May 7*



*Cheerful Beavers hold their pickers up high after litter-picking on Gerrards Cross common earlier this month. First Gerrards Cross Scouts also joined in this work, all as part of Scout Community Week.*

## Names of Parish Council Members

Chris Brown (Chairman)  
Jaspal Chhokar  
Ian Gordon  
Madeleine May  
Ian Bayliss  
Hellen Orme  
Mike Shiman  
Sabra Aga  
Jennifer Woolveridge  
Nicholas Moss  
Mike Lawson  
Peter Grimes

Find more information at:  
[gerrardscross.gov.uk/the-parish-councillors](http://gerrardscross.gov.uk/the-parish-councillors)

## Training in Twitter

At a meeting of the Communications Working Party in March it was recorded that Dan Turner was prepared to give a training session on Facebook to council members.

## Top Place

According to a recent issue of the Buckinghamshire Advertiser, house prices rose faster last year in Gerrards Cross than anywhere in Britain, going up by 33 per cent. It regularly tops the list of the most expensive places to live in England.

# Future of County's Transport



A detailed inquiry into public transport provision across Buckinghamshire is to be carried out by the County Council's cross-party Environment, Transport and Locality Service Select Committee to gauge aspirations for public transport towards 2020 and beyond.

The aim is to enable the county council to match more closely its support for public transport to future needs in a way that will serve communities more efficiently and effectively.

'This is an opportunity to go back to the fundamentals of what public transport needs to look like now and in the future,' said Select Committee Chairman Warren Whyte (*pictured*).

'We want to understand what's there at the moment, how people's needs are being met, and how those needs are changing and likely to change over the next five years and longer.

'Then the county council will be in a stronger position to target support much more effectively to ensure a sustainable and affordable public transport network in a time of increasing financial constraint.'

Mr Whyte says the Select Committee intends to explore the issue thoroughly in stages.

During the summer committee members will examine what's in place at present: current policy, the shape of the network, how the council's public transport budget is spent. They will bring this together through a two-day evidence-gathering inquiry.

Over the autumn and towards the winter, evidence gathering will continue as committee members seek input from groups and individuals representing all interests in the community, and consider a range of transport options and the connections between them.

The committee will try to paint a picture of future needs and demands of Buckinghamshire residents, and options available to support these. It will need to balance the county council's need to get value for money for taxpayers, with its aspirations to be a place where people can easily travel around.

The committee will compile its findings and recommendations to the Cabinet towards spring 2015.

'Community life never stands still,' said Mr Whyte. 'Population moves and needs change over time. By no means are they the same today as they were 20 years ago. We need to consider new and innovative ways of maximising reducing budgets to meet the needs of residents.

'We're asking the big question in relation to our current public transport support: "If we were to start all over again, would it look like this?"'

The cross-party inquiry group, chaired by Warren Whyte, includes Bill Bendyshe-Brown, Phil Gomm and Steven Lambert.

## What is Affordable Housing?

**Cllr Jennifer Woolveridge answers some questions**



In the early 1990s South Bucks District Council released all their council housing to Beacon Housing, a newly-formed charity. About 15 years later all these Beacon properties were taken over by another, much bigger housing association called London and Quadrant (L&Q).

When a resident of SBDC expresses a wish for rented property in South Bucks they are assessed according to their need. They are then encouraged, and given help if needed, to bid for a property named on an on-line list published every two weeks on "Bucks Home Choice."

This is the on-line choice-based letting scheme operated jointly by all the district councils in Buckinghamshire. There is a common allocations policy based on need and each council prioritises residents with a local connection.

As residents enjoy living in SBDC, only a few move out of their rented properties so not many properties become vacant. L&Q build houses when they can get the land – but as everyone knows land is very expensive in SBDC. This means that SBDC has a long list of

people wanting to move for family reasons or because of work.

Our new Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document is now in force so that developers have to take it into account that when five or more properties are built 40 per cent of the housing must be affordable. This should go some way to meet the council's need of 350-500 affordable homes before 2026.

SBDC has a number of schemes to increase our stock of affordable housing. The council uses money ('commuted sums') from developers when it is not suitable to include affordable housing in their developments. With this money the council buys back some properties which were bought by tenants under the 'Right to Buy', this has the advantage of being within the estates managed by L&Q. We try to encourage tenants to move out of properties now too large for them and the council pays their expenses. Tenants are also lent money by the council if they wish to move out of the area, thus releasing property in South Bucks.

L&Q build houses to sell in some of their developments in order to pay for the affordable

housing element. SBDC have in several cases, paid, using commuted sums, for these to be entirely affordable rented properties. All properties are owned and managed by our housing provider, L&Q.

Since the publication of our latest planning policy, the total number of affordable homes has been forty-three. This is a major change for the council and is most welcome as all vacancies help us to rehouse residents who wish to live within the SBDC boundary.

Finally, I am often asked what is meant by affordable housing in the context of SBDC. It is not rented housing for anyone who asks for it, nor is it for people who live outside the district, unless there is a good reason. It is our policy to provide housing for those most in need.

*Cllr. Jennifer Woolveridge  
Cabinet Member Health and Housing, SBDC*

# Times of Austerity

by Peter Hardy, County Councillor for Gerrards Cross, Beaconsfield Old Town and Hedgerley

Like all parts of the public sector the County Council is under severe pressure to reduce spending.

Our funding from Government has this year been reduced yet again, and although we have increased council tax by 1.5% this year after three years of freeze, our overall resources are in real terms much less than four years ago. At the same time the statutory obligations of the county council particularly to the vulnerable and those in greatest need are increasing. Sixty per cent of the county council budget goes on social care to disadvantaged children, the elderly and the disabled.

What this means is that budgets in other areas, principally transport and the environment, are ever more severely constrained, and funding is only available for critically important projects.

The main concern of residents in Buckinghamshire is the poor state of our

roads, made much worse by a succession of bad winters. In the last three years the council has increased spending to over £50m of taxpayers' money on resurfacing work, and our plans include a further £60m in the next four years. Yet these large sums seem barely to keep pace with deterioration in the network from winter weather. Over the course of the spring and summer maintenance gangs will catch up with the damage caused by the recent very wet winter. To get ahead of the problem we would need to finance even larger resurfacing programmes. This would mean large-scale borrowing which would have to be repaid, with consequences for the council taxpayer in future.

## Future of the County Council

To address the longer-term financial challenge we are starting a major programme of change to make the council

more commercially-minded, getting additional income from selling services outside the council and achieving a greater understanding of costs throughout the organisation. We want to combine private sector thinking with the public service ethos.

## Joint Schools Venture

Example initiatives are new companies such as Bucks Law+, selling legal services to schools and charitable organisations across the south-east, and Bucks Learning Trust, a joint schools venture in Buckinghamshire selling school improvement services round the world. It is difficult to exaggerate how much local government is having to change in this time of austerity, and I am pleased to report that your county council is in the forefront of these changes.

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## Memorial Centre's Award

Congratulations to the kitchen staff at the Memorial Centre for the hard work they have put in to maintaining the three kitchens to an excellent standard since they were refurbished late last year. The kitchens attained the highest rating following their Food Hygiene Inspection by South Bucks District Council due to new building, new kitchen design and new catering equipment.

All Centre staff, including office staff, are now accredited with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering. This is a major development for the Centre and represents a massive step forward from less than a year ago when the kitchens faced potential closure. The staff are striving to keep these high standards in order to provide the best service for customers.

The Centre circulated a Catering Survey to sound out how people use the cafe there. Completed surveys were entered into a prize draw and we hope to name the winner in the next issue of Voice.



## Lachmoor Pond

Lachmoor Pond, an attractive feature of West Common, and which was probably a historic watering place for coach horses on the London to Oxford Road, now needs some TLC. It is becoming overgrown and surrounded by willow slips which are reaching a height of more than 8ft. The path to the right has been flooded due to recent rain. The plan is to remove the willow slips and to install a French Drain, i.e. to dig a trench to lay a drainage pipe and to install three spurs off it and back into the pond. This will be along the edge of the path and will be back-filled with shingle.