

DISTRICT CONCILLOR'S REPORT TO CHEDDINGTON ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY 2011

First, I would like to thank the Parish Council for always making me welcome at its monthly meetings.

Financial matters

Council Tax 2011 – 2012

The amount of government grant paid to the District Council to enable it to provide services in the Vale will be significantly reduced in the coming year and again in 2012. In effect, for each £ that the council spent last year (2010) it will have only approximately 82 pence to spend in the coming year and approximately 73 pence in 2012. The cuts are more severe than the Council had anticipated. AVDC has already identified more than £1.8 million in savings for the 2011 budget. It also proposes to use some of its reserves to ensure that all services continue to be provided in the coming year. Over the next 12 months the Council will be reviewing all its services and their costs.

The 2011 – 2012 council tax, payable from this April, will remain substantially the same as last year's. Some small increases will occur in parishes where the parish council has increased the parish precept. Buckinghamshire County Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council, Thames Valley Police and the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority are keeping the tax at last year's rate. The total council tax bands for Cheddington are:

Band A: £995.19	Band E: £1824.53
Band B: £1161.05	Band F: £2156.26
Band C: £1326.93	Band G: £2487.98
Band D: £1492.79	Band H: £2985.58

Developments around the Vale

Planning for Houses and Jobs in Aylesbury Vale.

The District Council's "Core Strategy" plan provided for around 28,000 new homes in Aylesbury Vale by 2026. In October the coalition Government agreed to the Council withdrawing this plan. This means that the District Council is no longer committed to building 28,000 new homes. However, around 12,000 of the 28,000 have already been built or are under construction or have planning permission. The withdrawal of the core strategy could result in some large

“opportunistic” planning applications, particularly on the edge of Aylesbury, in areas which the core strategy had not identified for housing.

What, at present, seems clear is that there will not 28,000 new homes built in the Vale by 2026. However, a number in excess of 12,000 will be built.

The Council is now in the process of preparing a new plan *The Vale of Aylesbury Plan* which will cover the years to 2031. It is in the process of consulting Cheddington and all other parish councils in the Vale asking for their opinions on housing, jobs, infrastructure and leisure needs within their parish and in the Vale generally. The Parish Councils’ responses will help the Council decide what will go into *The Vale of Aylesbury Plan*.

The advantage of the coalition government’s new approach to housing is that it provides for local authorities and local communities to have a say in planning for new housing and jobs. A possible disadvantage is that in some regions of the country not enough new housing may become available to meet demand

Aylesbury’s Waterside Development.

The economic situation has slowed the pace of this project, which covers nearly 20 acres in the centre of Aylesbury. However, the Waterside Theatre is now open and offers a wide variety of shows including Aylesbury’s annual pantomime. The District Council was recently informed that the final cost of the theatre was £47 million. A further phase, of the Waterside development, consisting of a Waitrose store, an hotel and the National Enterprise Academy, will also, like the theatre, be built by the District Council. The cost of the supermarket and hotel amounts to approximately £18 million which the council proposes to borrow. I did not support this proposal in council as I do not believe that it is the role of the council to build supermarkets and hotels.

High Speed 2 Train from London to Birmingham.

The Government recently announced details of its preferred *High Speed 2* rail route from London to Birmingham. This would pass through Buckinghamshire to the west of Wendover, Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury and Quainton. The line is planned to be built by 2026 and requires a new rail corridor 100 metres wide. Some 30 trains per hour, running along it at 225 miles per hour, will be able to carry over 1,000 people each or will carry freight.

The County Council opposes the government’s preferred route, and advocates the West Coast Main Line through Cheddington as an alternative. The District Council initially supported this position but, following protests from myself and

other District Councillors, no longer does so. Its present position is that it opposes HS2 and does not advocate a West Coast Main Line or any other route.

At its last meeting the Council voted to spend up to £100,000 fighting the Government's HS2 plans. The vote went 48, or thereabouts, in favour with 2, Councillor Avril Davies and myself, abstaining. When I spoke I stated that I did not support the Government's preferred option to the west of Aylesbury, on the grounds that mitigation arrangements to minimise the effects of both noise and visual pollution were both inadequate and unimaginative; they amounted, in my opinion, to little more than a series of random gestures.

I further stated that in a time of economic crisis, with massive council spending and service cuts being implemented, I could not see how the spending of up to £100,000 of Aylesbury Vale council tax payers' money in this way could be justified.

There is, apparently, around £1,000,000 already available for a fighting fund to oppose HS2.

Cheddington Station

Proposed Closure of Cheddington Station Ticket Office

Apart from a poster at the station, London Midland appears not to have informed any of the local stakeholders of this proposal. However thanks to Cheddington Residents Association's prompt leafleting of all village households many people were able to respond to the proposal within the time imposed by the consultation deadline. A further thanks to the more than thirty people who at short notice, last Monday, turned up at Cheddington station for the Bucks Herald photographer. At the time of writing the consultation period has not yet closed. Many people have already sent their comments to London Midland and, obviously, the more who do so the better.

Contact details are:

This independent consultation ends on 22 March and all comments should be sent to:

Passenger Focus
Freepost (RRRE-ETTC-LEET)
PO Box 4257
Manchester, M60 3AR
or email: advice@passengerfocus.org.uk

More details of these proposals can be viewed at:
<http://www.londonmidland.com/news/latest-news/london-midland-proposes-changes-to-ticket-office-opening-hours/>

Waste and Recycling

Last Winter's Refuse and Recycling Collections

Most recycling and refuse collections took place on schedule in Cheddington during the wintry weather and over the Christmas and New Year holiday season. There were some problems where refuse and recycling crews were slowed down either because of poor road conditions, or the large volume of post-holiday refuse and recycling materials that they had to collect. However, most rounds that were not collected on the scheduled day were completed early on the following day.

New proposals for improved waste and recycling collections are, I am informed, due to come to council in the Autumn.

Democratic Details.

District Council

The political composition of the District Council is: Conservative 37, Liberal Democrat 21, and Independent 1.

My work as your District Councillor

In addition to my Cheddington ward commitments I am a member of the following District Council bodies:-

Development Control Committee
Licensing Committee
Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee
Environment Scrutiny Committee
Grants Panel
Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum
Aylesbury Vale Pub of the Year Competition
Volunteer of the Year Awards
Great Brickhill, Wing and Ivinghoe Local Area Forum
Leighton Linlade Area – Local Parishes Meeting

My Allowance and Expenses

My allowance and expenses for the last full financial year (2009–10) were:

Basic allowance:	£ 5,304
Mileage allowance:	£ 512.40
Parking:	£ 4.50
Train fare:	£ 24.80
TOTAL:	£ 5,845.70

The above figure does not include any costing for the laptop computer on loan to me from the Council. The mileage allowance includes attendance at site meetings all over the Vale for the development control committee.

Polling Day 5th May 2011

Thursday 5th May will be polling day for the parish and District Council elections and for the referendum on the alternative voting proposal for Parliament. Polling Stations will be open from 7am to 10pm.

Looking to the year ahead

2011 - 2012

The government grant reductions will inevitably have a serious effect on the council's 2011 – 12 budget, so that cuts to services would appear to be inevitable.

The new "Localism" bill increasing the powers of parish councils and local communities has the potential to increase, and to change for the better, decision making at local community level. Full details of these proposals have yet to emerge – the Neighbourhood plan appears set to play an important part in the future of villages and parishes.

If you have any questions about any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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