

Parish matters

News from Wychavon District Council for Town & Parish Councils



June 2016

Welcome to the latest issue of Parish Matters. In this edition we have details of our new strategy and promises for the coming four years, news of our Intelligently Green Awards, an update on the New Homes Bonus, and a reminder about the Worcestershire Viewpoint survey, which runs up until 10 June. We hope you enjoy reading it.

Jack Hegarty - Managing Director

New strategy, new promises

Our previous four year strategy drew to a close on 31 March. Since 2012 our focus has been on creating a strong economy, a strong environment and strong communities. Here are just a few of the things we've achieved during the last four years.

- Invested over **£650,000** on economic initiatives including broadband, infrastructure improvements and business grants.
- Helped create **201** new jobs in a range of industries.
- Brought **282** long-term empty properties back into use.
- Built **814** affordable homes.
- Provided **14,689** garden waste bins.
- Completed **six** flood protection schemes.
- Hosted **30** Community Games and encouraged **900** young people and over **2,500** adults to get active.
- Attended **49** community events and carried out **54** ward visits to meet residents and businesses.
- Approved over **£1 million** New Homes Bonus funding for a wide range of community projects in towns and villages.

We've now agreed a new four year strategy, which will run to March 2020. It sets a clear direction for us, helping to communicate our ambitions and priorities, as well as focusing our limited resources in the right areas. We base our strategy on local needs, what the Government expects us to do, what residents and partners tell us matters, what councillors want us to do and what we can afford. We've set three new priorities for the next four years, these are:

People: healthy, happy, active and supported.

Place: green, clean and safe with quality, affordable homes.

Prosperity: vibrant communities with quality jobs and skills.

Our strategy contains 18 promises for 2016/17 and beyond. Promises under the People priority include investing up to £5 million in sport and leisure facilities and visiting older people in at least 14 rural areas to offer them our services and support. Place promises include offering security advice and equipment to rural business burglary victims, tackling major fly-tipping and taking action in at least 20 hotspots, increasing public access and involvement at four Wychavon owned wildlife sites and supporting the delivery of sites for affordable housing in rural areas. Under Prosperity there are promises on investment to support the creation of 400 new jobs, helping at least 100 businesses to start-up, working with parish councils and community groups to increase awareness of local needs and support local activities, and councillors meeting residents and businesses in every ward. For more information about our strategy and to see the full list of promises go to www.wychavon.gov.uk/ourstrategy.

Housing issues on the agenda

Soaring house prices could mean that by 2020 home ownership becomes an impossible dream for those not already on the housing ladder. This warning was issued by one of the speakers during our latest Wychavon Partners Together event. The event focused on the housing issues facing the district and ways to collectively tackle them with our partners.

The average house price in Wychavon is now more than ten times the average income of £25,028, while the average rent is now £730 a month. During the event a number of key speakers from organisations including the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), developer Bloor Homes, Rooftop Housing and Fortis Living warned that housing supply was not keeping pace with demand and the gap between incomes and housing would prevent many potential homeowners from entering the market.

Councillor Richard Morris, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Housing, said: "We've already achieved a lot to help tackle the national housing shortage in this area by being creative and we'll continue to do all we can to find suitable solutions to the housing issues people face. By working together we can ensure we are doing everything we can to help provide people with a roof over their head."

A write-up of the event and a short film examining some of the housing issues facing Wychavon residents are available to view by visiting www.wychavon.gov.uk/partners-together-events.

Intelligently Green Awards

Nominations for this year's Intelligently Green Awards closed in April. We received a great range of entries - from a community shop and the founder of an oil buying group to an ice-cream maker and a mushroom grower. The awards celebrate projects and activities that are not only good for the environment but benefit the economy or save money as well. We made a little film about what it means to be Intelligently Green, which you can see at www.intelligently-green.com. The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony on 17 June, which is being hosted by impressionist and actor Alistair McGowan and held at Pershore College's fabulous new sustainable building.

Latest Worcestershire Viewpoint survey

The 2016 Worcestershire Viewpoint survey went live recently and runs until 10 June. The survey is an opportunity for residents to have a say on the issues that affect them and tell us what they think about us and the services we provide. We track changes in views from year-to-year and a number of the results form the basis of some of the success measures in our new strategy. For those of you on social media, please do encourage residents to sign up and take part in the survey at www.worcestershire.gov.uk/viewpoint.

New Homes Bonus

The national consultation on New Homes Bonus (NHB) closed in March. Once the outcome is known we will develop a new New Homes Bonus Protocol and make decisions about how we will use Year Six and any future years New Homes Bonus. In the meantime, we have published the latest tranches of Years Two to Five New Homes Bonus available to communities on our website. Click [here](#) to check your parish or town's current New Homes Bonus allocations. The amount available to draw down excludes any monies we have approved but not yet paid to you.

We'd like to take this opportunity to remind you again about the requirement, set out in our New Homes Bonus Protocol, that you properly consult your community about how New Homes Bonus allocations for your area should be spent, and provide evidence that this has been done. We have recently returned a number of proposals where this has not happened. Any New Homes Bonus consultation should involve the following elements:

- a) Informing residents how much New Homes Bonus is available for your area.
- b) Inviting ideas and suggestions from residents about how they would like to see it spent – not just asking them whether they support a specific project.
- c) In addition to b), putting forward any suggestions or recommendations that the parish/town council wishes to make (optional).

You can find further guidance and some examples on our [website](#).

Please remember to use our [web facility](http://www.wychavon.gov.uk/newhomesbonus) – www.wychavon.gov.uk/newhomesbonus – to check NHB allocations and available funds for parishes in your ward.

For more information about New Homes Bonus, contact Tracy Perkins on 01386 565517 or email tracy.perkins@wychavon.gov.uk.

Evesham projects in the spotlight during tour

A number of successful Evesham community projects were in the spotlight during a recent tour arranged for members of our Localism and Community Funding Advisory Panel. The projects were made possible thanks to funding from our New Homes Bonus scheme and contributions from developers (known as Section 106 contributions). We allocate up to 40% of the New Homes Bonus money we receive from the Government to local communities where new development has taken place. Town and parish councils submit proposals to the advisory panel for consideration, and the panel also looks at proposals for improvements funded through some of the developer contributions.

With many of the Evesham projects having recently been completed, councillors and co-optees on the advisory panel took the opportunity to see how the funding that they had approved had been put to use.

During the tour councillors visited the recently completed projects at:

- Crown Meadow – the 'No Limits' play area received nearly £50,000 of New Homes Bonus and Section 106 funding.



- Evesham War Memorial – £10,000 of New Homes Bonus money was given as a contribution towards the refurbishment of the Evesham War Memorial.
- Abbey Park Café and new sculpture – a new timber framed kiosk was constructed and the area landscaped, allowing the café to be reopened by sisters Donna Milimono and Dawn Welland, who have expanded their business to take over the café (they already run the Bridge Street Kitchen in Evesham’s town centre). Next to the café is a new fish sculpture created by local blacksmith Steve Cooper. The fish with a key was chosen to illustrate the story of St Egwin and links up with the statue of Eoves (also known as Eof) in Evesham’s Market Square. The refurbished café and sculpture were made possible through £150,000 of Section 106 funds.



- The Bell Tower – £50,000 of New Homes Bonus money was given towards the conservation work to the Bell Tower.



To find out if the area you live in has a New Homes Bonus allocation, go to www.wychavon.gov.uk/newhomesbonus and click on the link for allocations.

To find out more about the panel’s work, go to www.wychavon.gov.uk/localism.

Flood insurance advice for homeowners

Flood Re is a flood re-insurance scheme that has been set up to help those households who live in a flood risk area find affordable home insurance. Flood Re requires all companies who provide home insurance in the UK to put money into a central pot. Insurers can then place their policies with the Flood Re scheme, which means that claims for flood damage to homes are paid for out of the Flood Re pot. The insurance company Aviva has produced a video to explain a little bit more about the scheme and you can view it [here](#). More information is also available at www.floodre.co.uk/homeowner.

Parish Flood Alleviation Support Grants

There is some limited funding still available for Parish Councils to use on minor flood related projects. If you believe you might have a scheme that you can pull off please contact Tony Jones, Engineering Consultancy Manager at Wychavon, on 01386 565350 or email tony.jones@wychavon.gov.uk.

The War Memorials Listing Project

In 2014, to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, Historic England embarked upon a five year project to add 2,500 war memorials to the National Heritage List for England. It is possible to apply for the listing of any war memorial and we are hoping to apply to list those in our towns that are not already listed. There are many war memorials throughout the district that could also be considered for listing. Anyone can make an application and information and guidance can be found through [this link](#). For more information about the War Memorials Trust, go to www.warmemorials.org.

My Local Area

Our popular My Local Area webpage has been transformed. It is now clearer and easier to use and people can find out a wealth of information about a property or area; this includes ‘Where’s my nearest’, electoral details, Council Tax and Business Rates information, as well as a direct link to waste and recycling collection days. For those who want to see all this information on a map, a quick switch to ‘map’ view will display this information geographically. The map view also supports features such as an option to select planning applications and provides links to our online planning pages. This is a valuable online resource and we’d encourage you to use it and share it with people you know. Just go to www.wychavon.gov.uk and click on the link from the homepage.

Avon Meadows

If you go and visit the stunning Avon Meadows – Pershore’s community wetland and local nature reserve – you can now get even closer to nature thanks to the launch of a new and free mobile phone app. The Avon Meadows app, developed by Evesham-based creative design agency Areca Design, uses Mobile Augmented Reality (AR) technology to bring the wetland to life through the smartphone in your pocket. By placing your phone’s camera over new information boards (there’s also a visitor’s map that works with the app), you will be able to see the various birds and creatures living there moving around before your eyes. You can then click on each creature to find out more information as you enjoy a walk around the wetlands. There are also various viewing points on the in-app 3D map, which when clicked on will transform the meadows into full bloom. The launch of the app is a celebration of our three year Wetlands for All project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, supported by Pershore Town Council and the Friends of Avon Meadow. The aim of the project was to enhance the meadows so they could be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities. This has included installing more than 500 metres of new easy access footpaths, information boards featuring braille, wider entrance gates and walking trails around the meadows. Over the last three years almost 400 school children have visited the meadows and events have ranged from pond dipping and guided walks to all day wildlife extravaganzas, photographic workshops and Viking battles. More than 100 volunteers have also taken part in practical conservation work, training courses and wildlife surveys, which have helped to grow our understanding of how important the wetlands are for wildlife as well as for people. A new management plan has been written by the Friends of Avon Meadows, and thanks to the project there is a new long-term vision to transform Avon Meadows into a flower-rich meadow, something which the new app allows everyone to see for themselves. To find out more about Avon Meadows contact Liz Etheridge, Wychavon’s Wetlands for All Project Officer, on 01386 565217 or email liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk.



One of the new information boards



Looking at bugs!

South Worcestershire Rural Communities Programme

The programme, which works with Parish Councils and community groups to support older and vulnerable people in rural Wychavon, is now well established and working with more than 25 communities across the district. Communities have been keen to respond to the challenge with new activities, such as clubs and celebration events, springing up to offer more opportunities for residents. Some villages, such as Badsey and Bretforton, are engaging new residents in the village with welcome packs, using the templates provided on the Rural Communities Programme website – www.wychavon.gov.uk/rural. The website is a great place to find out about what other villages are doing to help their residents, find helpful toolkits and templates or even check how strong your own village is through our Village Health Check. With another eight door knocks scheduled for this year, along with our partners we are busy providing help on the doorstep to those residents that need it most. We have already made over 300 referrals to services and are making recommendations to parish councils on how to support their communities at a very local level. For further information about the Rural Communities Programme, please contact David Manning on 01386 565478 or email david.manning@wychavon.gov.uk.

Welcoming new residents to Wychavon

Wychavon’s population is growing, with new developments springing up in our towns and villages across the district. This growth in development brings with it opportunities for communities to harness new skills, experience and volunteering capacity brought by new residents, but it can also pose challenges as new people and communities settle in. In recognition of this, we are setting up a fund to help ease this process and we are now looking for good examples of where existing communities have gone that extra mile to welcome new residents. This could be anything from a welcome pack dropped into a new development or for a new resident, to a local welcome event or even an innovative way of getting new residents involved with activities. If you have some good examples from your community then please get in touch and let us know about it and the impact they have had. Please send information by email to David Manning at david.manning@wychavon.gov.uk.

Business and Rural Crime team update



The South Worcestershire Business and Rural Crime initiative goes from strength to strength. Our Business and Rural Crime Coordinator, Simon Thompson (centre in the photo), and two Business and Rural Crime Liaison Officers – Clive Parsons (on the left) and Ian White (on the right) – continue to do sterling work and have visited and supported over 400 victims of business and rural crime, the majority of whom would not otherwise have received a visit by the police. Over 300 items of free security and crime prevention equipment have also been given away to vulnerable and repeat victims. Specific business and rural crime initiatives include:

- CCTV cameras have been purchased and are in constant use by vulnerable and repeat victims throughout South Worcestershire.
- The Worcestershire Rural Watch website has been created in partnership with North Worcestershire to provide crime prevention advice and information reporting methods along with other useful information for all residents.
- “Police Check” – these are farm machinery and trailer crime prevention stickers that draw attention to the fact that machinery is marked and that police may stop and check vehicles if they’re spotted outside the area.
- Local tack marking events funded by the business and rural crime initiative.
- Crime prevention visits and advice.
- Assisted in setting up and mapping farm boundaries in order to help combat poaching in the area and assist the police in responding to reports of this type of crime.

For further information or advice please contact the Business and Rural Crime Coordinator, Simon Thompson, on 01386 565383 or email simon.thompson@wychavon.gov.uk.

Green Deal Communities latest

The solid wall insulation scheme, which is part of the Green Deal Communities (GDC) funding bid, has now reached its end in terms of customers being able to sign up to have the insulation. The project has been a success and the Department of Energy and Climate

Change allowed us to exceed our target of insulating 750 homes to 823.

Through this project a total of £1,513,379.47 funding has been levered in for Wychavon residents. Wychavon actually achieved 35% of the total funding across the county. If you’re interested in figures then here they are for Wychavon:

- Referrals: 765
- Sign-ups: 285
- Total Install Costs: £2,314,903.33
- Average Install Cost: £8,122.47
- GDC Funding: £1,105,980.42
- Average GDC: £3,880.63
- ECO Funding: £407,399.05
- Average ECO: £1,429.47
- Total Customer Contribution: £775,388.33
- Average Customer Contribution: £2,720.66
- Total Estimated Saving: £78,384.78
- Average Annual Savings: £275.03
- Carbon Savings: 8,148 tonnes
- Promotional Events: 64

If you’d like to know more, please contact Mary Unwin, Principal Housing Officer, on 01386 565352 or email mary.unwin@wychavon.gov.uk.

Keep cool this summer

WYCHAVON
Keep cool this summer
and let us do the hard work for you

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collections
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Sign up today
Search Wychavon garden waste online or call 01386 565018 to register



Bulky waste
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A reliable service you can trust
Call 01386 760145
Mon-Fri 9am-5pm
*price dependent on size

www.wychavon.gov.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

South Worcestershire Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) is a local charity providing free and impartial information, advice and specialist casework services to the public by drop in, telephone and e-mail at various locations across the district, including Droitwich, Evesham and Pershore. The service is delivered primarily using highly trained volunteers (supported by a small, paid management team) who use an information system to help clients find the most cost-effective way to manage their issues. In Wychavon these are typically debt, welfare rights, employment, housing, family or personal problems. Details of the CAB's opening times and how the service can be accessed are available at www.citizensadvice.org.uk.

Wychavon CALC

We expect that most parish and town councils will have held, or are planning to hold, their annual council meetings. After the election of the chairman, many councils have a standard agenda for their annual meeting. If your council is a member of the County Association of Local Councils (that's CALC for short), and we're glad to say that the vast majority of councils are members, we hope that one of the standard items of business is to appoint your council's representatives to CALC's Wychavon Area Meeting. The area meeting meets quarterly and is a really good forum for networking with colleagues from other councils and deciding what to do about matters of mutual concern or interest. There is usually a guest speaker, and anyone attending can suggest a topic that they think will be useful and interesting. The area meeting is also the means by which member councils decide who will represent them on the CALC Executive Committee, which effectively runs the organisation. As you might expect, meetings are well attended when there are items on the agenda that people are interested in or the guest speaker's topic is a hot one. So please come along and keep the hot topics coming. For more information contact Caroline Sutton on 01684 311554 or email caroline@worcscscal.org.uk.

Verdun oaks



The Woodland Trust wants history buffs to turn detective and help them discover the lost Verdun oaks. The oak trees, which were planted as memorials for soldiers who fell during the First World War, are now 100 years old. The trees were originally planted from acorns collected

from the battlefield after the Battle of Verdun; the battle, which lasted for 302 days and led to the deaths of around 400,000 troops, marked its anniversary on 21 February 2016. If you can help find the Verdun oaks please email the Woodland Trust at verdunoak@woodlandtrust.org.uk or [click here](#) for more information.

What do you think?

Please let us know what you think of this newsletter. If you like it or find the information useful, then please let us know which particular bits of news you like. And do you share this news with your parishioners? What else would you like to see in the newsletter? Please send your comments to Spencer Winnett – spencer.winnett@wychavon.gov.uk.

And finally...



Look out for WYCHAVON, our magazine for residents, which is being delivered to all households in the district throughout June.



You are welcome to reproduce any of these articles for your own parish newsletter, magazine or website.

Parish Matters is edited by Spencer Winnett. Contact him with your feedback on 01386 565585 or by emailing spencer.winnett@wychavon.gov.uk.