

Padbury Annual Parish Meeting – 14th April 2015.

Report from Cllr Llew Monger (Liberal Democrat) – Aylesbury Vale District Council
Member for Winslow Ward (including Addington, Adstock, Padbury, Shipton and Winslow)

Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) is one of the largest in the country with a population of 180,000 represented by 59 District Councillors. The political makeup is as follows; Conservative 36, Liberal Democrat 17, UKIP 3, Independent 2, Labour 1. Padbury is in the Winslow Ward which also includes, Adstock, Addington, Shipton and Winslow itself.

AVDC is responsible for Planning, Waste Collection and Recycling, Economic Development, Community Matters, Leisure, Environment, Housing and Benefits. The Council operates through a Cabinet system which means, in effect, that it is controlled by a small group of members from the largest political party. There are four Scrutiny Committees with cross-party membership which, in theory, have oversight of the decisions and policies of the Cabinet. There are also regulatory committees for planning and licencing.

AVDC receive 10% of the Council Tax they collect from you. The rest goes to Bucks County Council (75%), Thames Valley Police (11%) and the Fire Service (4%). Historically the District and County Councils received about 50% of their budget from Council Tax and 50% from the annual central government grant. Over the last few years the latter has been gradually reduced and as a result councils have been forced to increase charges for some services, reduce staff numbers and either drop some services or pass them on to parish councils or the voluntary sector. This is set to continue whatever the complexion of the next government.

Aylesbury Vale is in a dreadful position with regard to future housing development as they have now twice failed to deliver a district wide Local Development Plan and the third attempt, Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VAP) will not be completed before mid-2017 at best. Fortunately I was able to persuade members of all parties on the Council to support my proposal to set up a special Scrutiny Committee to oversee the development of the new plan. This oversight and scrutiny will ensure that this time the plan meets the government requirements without any political interference.

All planning authorities (AVDC for us) have to maintain a five year supply of land approved for housing development to meet on-going needs. AVDC do not have a five year supply and in those circumstances the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) dictates that there is a '*presumption in favour of sustainable development*' unless '*any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits*'. This has already had serious implications for many smaller villages in the Vale where housing developments have been approved contrary to local wishes. There is no doubt that we need more housing and that includes a need for affordable homes to rent. However, those houses need to be the right type in the right places, at the right time and with the support of the local community. Winslow and Great Horwood have addressed this issue by developing Neighbourhood Plans which have real weight in planning terms. I am pleased that Padbury Parish Council have now started the process and have offered my support. Believe me it will be a difficult project, taking a year or so, and will require the involvement and commitment of the whole community. In Winslow we achieved 98.2% approval for the final plan in a community referendum and I sincerely hope that Padbury will have a similar level of success.

During the year I have supported residents on issues related to, housing, benefits, planning applications, highways matters, anti-social behaviour, homelessness, local policing, farming, community groups, public transport and council tax. I represent AVDC on the Trustee Board of Buckingham and Winslow Citizens Advice Bureau. I also chaired the Steering Group which developed the Winslow Neighbourhood Plan and successfully represented the community at two public enquiries. If re-elected on May 7th I will continue to offer my support to all residents and parish councils in the Ward.

Cllr Llew Monger