

## District Cllr Chris Poll's Report for the September 2019 Meeting

### Woodland Trust Tree Grant

Cllr Poll advised the Council about the Woodland Trust looking to grant tree donations, more info can be found using the following link:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/tree-pack-application-form/?step=1>

### Chairman's charity fundraising.

Cllr Poll will be taking part in a charity abseil more information can be found at

[https://www.gofundme.com/f/AVDC-Chairmans-Charity-Abseil?utm\\_source=facebook](https://www.gofundme.com/f/AVDC-Chairmans-Charity-Abseil?utm_source=facebook)

### Environment

Cllr Poll informed the Council about an AVDC legacy project, he advised the council that he will update them once rules for allocations with regard to the £60k funding for small environmental projects are finalised.

On 18<sup>th</sup> September a motion was passed which asks the new Buckinghamshire authority to become carbon neutral by 2030. These climate motions, declaring "emergencies" are becoming quite popular at the moment. Whilst we can all do something to reduce our footprint on the environment I rather feel drawing a line in the sand is too rigid and we would be better to respond to new products or behaviours which could help more and sooner. However, the new authority do not have to take into account this deadline and they will need to decide for themselves what is realistic.

### Motion to Oppose the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway

Oxford Cambridge arc; I include the whole reasoning and motion for your information.

#### Background:

Council notes that the UK Government, in tandem with the National Infrastructure Commission, has proposed the construction of a motorway-style **expressway between Oxford and Cambridge**. This new road will have significant adverse impacts on Aylesbury Vale.

Depending on the eventual route, the Expressway could destroy farmland and **habitats**, including a SSSI. Construction projects should result in biodiversity net gains. However the "gained" biodiversity may not be the same as that which has been lost. Some, such as ancient woodland, is irreplaceable. Infrastructure providers will offer to offset the negative impact in one place by protecting or replacing biodiversity elsewhere, which is of little benefit to local residents or wildlife.

The council does not support the construction of another motorway such as the Expressway at a time of **climate emergency**. Transport accounts for 1/3 of all carbon emissions in the UK and the figure has only dropped by 3.2% since 1990. The expressway will increase CO2 emissions, which is incompatible with the government's declared target of reducing emissions to net zero by 2050, and will bring more traffic onto the county's existing roads.

The Council believes that the Expressway will cause major harm to the **quality of life of Vale residents** as it passes through the district. The additional noise from the expressway will be significant as well as increased air pollution from NOx, hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and particulate matter.

The Council was right not to sign a non-disclosure agreement with Highways England.

Highways England's own analysis of the Expressway shows a **low benefit-cost ratio (BCR) in the range of 1.1 – 1.3**.

**This council fully supports the East-West rail route**, with full electrification and use of the rail line for freight as part of the strategic rail network, offering direct connections to the West Coast Main Line, Midland Main Line, and East Coast Main Line.

### **Council therefore resolves to:**

- Oppose the Expressway project and support the electrification of the East West Rail route for passenger and freight traffic as part of the strategic rail network. We should encourage these intermodal connections to East West rail to discourage long distance freight by road.
- Support better East West public transport and active travel solutions.
- Adopt this position on the Expressway in the future consultation on the route options from Highways England.
- Continue to support environmental partnership working, particularly the work of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership, and continue to promote these elements as vital mitigation if the Expressway does progress.

### **Unitary**

The shadow exec meets regularly and are making decisions on a wide range of issues for the new authority.

The leader of the Shadow Executive (Martin Tett) has been providing an update on the work of the Exec and the opportunities for us to become involved in 'member challenge groups'. These will be aligned to Shadow Executive members portfolio roles and members (excepting those on the Shadow scrutiny committee) will be able to work with the lead portfolio member on the budget build and portfolio strategy.

AVDC leader Angela McPherson has been allocated the lead portfolio role for Adult Social Care which includes safeguarding older people, mental health, physical disability and learning disability. This portfolio is responsible for the largest spend in the new authority of c£180million gross.

In addition to the above she is also a member of the panel for Senior Appointments. They went through a long and very thorough process to appoint Rachael Shimmin as the CEO for the new authority and the next tranche of recruitment starts soon for the six director posts that report directly to Rachael.

### **Spending Review.**

This week the Chancellor announced his spending review. On the face of it this seems like pretty good news for local government. However it is important to exercise a degree of caution. Firstly, this announcement is for one year. It is not a commitment to an ongoing increase in council revenue budgets. The budget build work for the new authority which starts now will need to look carefully at the detail behind the announcement and adopt a prudent approach.

### **Brexit**

Government has requested that every local authority nominates a Brexit officer and this is Andrew Small for AVDC, supported by Andy Barton one of our Assistant Directors. The work undertaken to date has been to revalidate and assess the risks of Brexit for the council, and in doing so identify actions to address these. We have undertaken the first round of this work, and have put in place a number of actions to ensure that we can secure the safe running of our services – with what is known at present we are confident we will be able to continue to operate at or close to normal.

