

ATWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Another busy year has past with much happening in our Melksham Without Area, and with apparent big changes ahead.

I suppose the biggest change and talking point on the near horizon is that of the Melksham “Campus”. Not a word I particularly like, but I have to say I do generally like the idea and should the campus go ahead think it would be further welcomed investment in Melksham, following the now well under way new ASDA, well supported Waitrose and fantastic new school, to name just some.

I am very aware of concerns relating to the re-siting of our library and have to be upfront when I say that I don’t believe press coverage, using words like “closing” and “loss” do us any favours when relating to the proposed moves. I do, most honestly believe that if this “Campus” goes ahead, we will look back in a few years time with pride at how Melksham has developed. As a local Councillor I have to look at the facts. After extensive protest, surveys, press coverage, consultations and petitions, only around 20% of the total library membership (not all were library members) signed petitions (against “closing” the library), and only 28% of residents returned their postal surveys of which many were generally in favour of the Campus. Some of course will always disagree, and I as a local Councillor will be called upon to explain myself, if for example we don’t manage to secure adequate transport, which we will strive to secure at any planning stages, and I will fully deserve any resident anger if not successful.

Around my ward, we have achieved much but not all that is required, although with considerable financial constraints I am satisfied we have done fairly well.

In West Hill for example we have the new gateway feature, loved by some, hated by others, but at least it is being noticed which hopefully means people are slowing down to have a look and not blindly speeding on regardless. There have been potholes and Planning applications a plenty across my Ward, some successful some not, in both categories, but with new money now awarded for potholes I hope many more will be reported and hence repaired, and who knows, maybe a few paths in Whitley as well.

The lights and pedestrian crossing at Shaw school has been an ongoing problem but I think at last we have reached a fairly satisfying result with improved beacons at the pedestrian crossing and traffic lights that can, most of the time, be seen. This doesn’t of course stop speeding drivers, that I have witnessed first hand, at this and other sites around the Ward, with our local police and it saddens me that they show such little concern for the potential consequences of their actions.

Atworth Parish Council was one of only three Parish Councils to receive praise for co-operation in Flood alleviation talks and for their lead in local Parish Planning strategies and a pro-active Parish Council has helped in us obtaining some of the limited funds for minor road repairs and services. I have witnessed at first hand our problem with speeding drivers through the Parish and will continue to work on Speed Indicator devices. I was pleased that the Area Board was able to agree funds towards another of the Parishes long fights to re-kerb the village green opposite the school, an area of historical importance you have helped to preserve.

I am pleased that Pub Watch has found a new Chairman and I will continue to push for any new licence applications to be conditioned with membership of Pub Watch as standard. This has not been possible in the past, however, I am hoping to have this included in local bylaws, an idea supported by central government and I think very worth while as Pub Watch has a proven track record in Melksham. On mentioning tracks there is also a possibility of improved Rail Services on the horizon which will hopefully not only help with congestion but will encourage visitors to Melksham.

Personally I have had a difficult few months, both as a Councillor and privately with illness, so must thank many people for their patience and continued support. Touch wood I am now fully recovered. I feel I must apologise to any members I upset by voting on grants applied for by Melksham Town Council on which I also sit, as this was seen by some to be “unfair” on other grant applications. I have been cleared of any wrong doing and I do still have the un-wavering opinion that the grants I voted on were for the good and benefit of all Melksham and wider area residents.

Recently, 23rd February, I had another example of why we all do this Councillor thing, when I was able to visit the home of a 10 year old resident and his friends in Shaw, who had taken it upon themselves to write to WC Chief Executive to ask for help with a Skateboard park. Refreshingly, they didn't expect the world, had done a great deal of work themselves into the project and at 10 years old were polite, intelligent and talkative. I look forward to helping George and Joe in the future, whatever the outcome.

My kind regards to you all. I look forward to the next year and new challenges.

Councillor Mark Griffiths