

Cllr Pearl Lewis, Luffield Abbey Ward,

Aylesbury Vale District Council

March 2013 Update to Akeley Parish Council

*For further information on how I am working for you, please visit
www.pearllewis.yourcllr.com*

Recycling Figures Doubled

After the launch of the new waste and recycling service in 2012, latest figures show that recycling rates have jumped to 54% over the first four months of the new system, more than doubling how much recycling AVDC collected in 2011 - ahead of current targets set by the Government.

Nearly 9,000 tonnes of waste have been saved from going into landfill - equivalent to the weight of over a thousand double decker buses. The saving in landfill tax has already been hundreds of thousands of pounds.



I know there were some teething problems with the rollout of the service in the rural areas, and I thank you for your support during this change. These figures really show what a difference the new system is making.

Planning Applications, the Vale of Aylesbury Plan, and South East Plan Revocation

I have spent most of the year helping to represent residents over planning applications. Most have been small applications, but the obvious high profile one was the 80 homes on the Moreton Road. As you may know, the planning inspector overturned our refusal of this application, but as we believe the planning inspector erred in law when coming to this conclusion (concerning the interpretation of the South East Plan housing figures), we have lodged a challenge at the High Court. More information on this challenge can be found on my website at www.pearllewis.yourcllr.com.



Phase One of the Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VAP), the housing figures for the next 30 years, was approved for submission to the planning inspector in October 2012. With the revocation of the South East Plan **TODAY (25th March 2013)**, the VAP will have more weight in planning terms. Work on the remainder of the Plan will start shortly.

New Homes Bonus

AVDC decided in December to share part of the money received in new homes bonus with the towns and parishes directly. We are one of only two local authorities in the country to pass the money down to local communities in this way - many councils are using this money to prop up their revenue budgets, but we have made a commitment to ring fence this money for growth initiatives. Parishes and towns can apply for a share of the money for projects in their area that have arisen as a result of

growth. Some residents requested that the money was passed directly to parish councils. However, as it does not follow that the impact of the growth in housing is proportionate to the amount coming in per house via the NHB, the allocation panel system will allow larger projects to be funded for smaller parishes, or groups of parishes where they otherwise wouldn't have received the equivalent money if it had been passed to them directly.

Chairmanship of Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee

Residents may wish to know that I now chair the Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee at the Council. This committee considers the ways in which we can encourage new business into the Vale, support existing businesses and provide a thriving and sustainable economy. We are currently looking at the rural economy - we would appreciate residents views on how AVDC can improve its work with rural businesses to support them more.

Buckingham Canal Society

The Buckingham Canal Society (BCS) are steaming ahead with their restoration plans, achieving planning permission for the Bourton Meadow end of the arm in June 2012. They also received a £70,000 grant from WREN this year to push ahead with getting this part of the canal back in water. The Society has recently relaunched its new website - please do go online and see what they are up to at www.buckinghamcanal.org.uk. Unfortunately I have had to stand down as a member of the BCS committee this year due to other increasing commitments as a councillor, but I am still a member of the Society and support them where I am able to.



School Governorship

I have recently been appointed as a School Governor at St James and St John School in Akeley and Chackmore, and am looking forward to working with the governing body to support the continuing achievement of the school, and its staff and children in the future. It was pleasing to see an overall 'good' rating for the School in its OFSTED inspection in December 2012.

Council Tax Rise



Residents will know that AVDC voted in February 2013 to raise the level of council tax by just under 2%. Unfortunately our settlement from the government this year was worse than we had initially expected - the settlement means that we will receive £107,000 less than even our worst case scenario forecast - 354 out of 384 councils received a better settlement than AVDC highlighting the challenge we face. Between 2010 and 2015, the grant settlement will have reduced by 48% which means we have £5.7m less money to deliver

services. In practice as this table shows, whereas in 2010/2011 we had £310 to provide services to each home, by 2015/2016, this will have reduced to £219.

	2010/11	2013/2014	2015/2016
Council tax	£131	£134	£140
Grant	£179	£108	£ 79
Funding for services	£310	£240	£219

The Government has already indicated that the grant settlement is likely to be reduced year on year until at least 2017. A shortfall of at least £1m will need to be found each year either through further savings or income generation. We are working hard to find savings at the council without compromising services, and we have achieved great things so far - for example, a customer service restructure has saved us £500,000. However, with the situation as it is, there is a real possibility that the government grant may be removed completely in the future.

AVDC's Design Awards

Buildings in Luffield Abbey featured in November's AVDC's Design Awards – celebrating innovative planning design – for the third year running. In 2010, the science teaching block in the historic setting of Thornton College won the award, and in 2011 the Silverstone Wing at Silverstone Circuit also won, with the art block at Stowe School receiving a highly commended award. This year, the New Inn at Stowe won the award for restoring the New Inn as a visitor centre, museum, cafe and shop for the National Trust. It's great to see such fantastic building design being recognised in even the most rural areas of the Vale.



County Council Elections

Warren White has been selected as the Conservative Party Candidate for May's County Council Elections. Warren has worked hard for the people of Buckingham as a town councillor and I know he will be an excellent choice to represent the interests of the North of the county at Buckinghamshire County Council.

Superfast Broadband Update

After the upgrade of the Buckingham exchange, the new intervention money from BDUK cash (given to Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire in their joint bid totally £2.3m) should target 532 Luffield Abbey properties to give them superfast broadband (meaning around 90% of the ward will have superfast). Solutions for the remaining homes will be explored by the BAC3 Community Interest Company that Terry and I are directors of.

