



CROStalk



Princes Risborough Town Council Newsletter Issue No.46 October 2010



Photograph courtesy of Peter Dixon

Chairman's View

Well, it really is an exciting time for our town centre. With much appreciated "matched funding" from Wycombe District Council, the Town Council have employed the services of Action for Market Towns/Retail Revival, (AMT/RR), for a two year town centre revitalisation project. Given that the country is still in the grip of recession this project is great news for Princes Risborough and should really help to promote the town centre's attributes. Things are already moving rapidly, with the Town Council working closely with other local organisations, such as Risborough Area Community Action (RACA), and town centre retailers. The immediate aim is to form a "Town Centre Partnership" with representatives from these groups and other individuals involved. This Partnership would then locate funding to employ a Town Centre Manager who would be tasked with project delivery management, working closely with businesses and the economic development of the town centre. In the meantime, AMT/RR have held several very successful workshops with town centre businesses, as well as completing extensive market research and benchmarking Princes Risborough against other similar sized market towns across the Country. Plans to expand the weekly Thursday Charter Market and to hold specialist Sunday markets, (e.g. farmer's market, antiques market, etc.), are well under way, with applications for grant funding currently being processed. Research carried out by AMT/RR has shown that town

centre footfall and car park usage is significantly increased on our current market day, so the planned expansion should mean even greater footfall and trade for the Town Centre as a whole. There are lots of other short and long term projects under consideration and a public meeting will be called soon in order to give a far more detailed presentation of all that is going on and to offer the opportunity for any interested individuals to become involved. As if all this is not enough, there is a possibility, (fingers crossed!), that Princes Risborough may be used as the location for a TV production, centred on the Town. At the time of writing this article it is too early to know if it will happen, but should it go ahead it would certainly provide a huge amount of publicity for Princes Risborough. As I began this article by saying, it really is an exciting time for our town centre and with everyone, retailers, Town Council, RACA, etc., working in partnership we can, no, shall achieve great strides forward for our Town. Finally, as the next edition of Crosstalk is not due until the New Year, may I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Alan Turner
Mayor & Chairman
Princes Risborough Town Council



Value for Money? How is your Council doing?

Stratton Memorial Garden and Burial Ground

A 'Stop Press' item in issue No 40 of Crosstalk (November 2008) announced that The Stratton Memorial Garden and Burial Ground was open. Its name recognises the generosity of Miss Anne Stratton in donating the land to the town for that purpose. Since that time the garden has matured and the burial ground has become established as a necessary part of our community. Those of us who have been town councillors for some time will recall the many discussions that took place before and during its development. Inevitably a major point in those discussions was the cost to the community in establishing the site and the repayment of the loan that would be needed to complete the project.

Figures that were presented to the Town Council at the time indicated that fees generated from interments would cover the loan repayments. The Town Council took out a loan of £250,000 in order to develop the site and repayments stand at £19220 per annum. For the last 12 months (October 2009 to September 2010) fees collected were £5552.50.

Continued Over

Community Cinema
Now In Princes Risborough.
See page 4 For further details

Clearly the projected figures have proved to be optimistic. As a consequence the shortfall in fees will have to be made up from the town precept. In addition, it should be recognised that the maintenance of the complex of flower beds that make up most of the Memorial Garden is more costly than the Town's other open spaces where grass-cutting is all that is needed. The Town Council is conscious of this problem and are looking at ways to minimize the ongoing costs to the town. The office staff is now actively promoting the Memorial Garden both in and outside the town. An example of another cost saving is;

Maintenance Team

Issue No 45 (April 2010) headlined the introduction of the Town maintenance team. For some time the Town Council has been uncomfortable at the increasing costs of maintaining our open spaces. As a consequence the total cost of general maintenance such as litter picking, grass cutting, tending flower beds, etc within each spending committee's remit was assessed and compared with the likely cost of using an in-house system rather than a contracting - out system. To establish our own maintenance team we would have one-off commitments to purchase a large selection of tools and equipment, and pay for the necessary courses to bring the team up to legal requirements. Annual costs would include salaries for personnel, lease agreements for a small lorry and fuel consumption. Extracting the totals for litter picking, etc from the current precept gave a figure of £69890. Figures for the cost of purchasing the necessary equipment, leasing a small lorry and employing two operatives came to £63000 – a saving of £6890 in the first year. Savings in subsequent years may be larger (possibly £15310) as there is no capital outlay on tools, etc.

We are now looking at the pros and cons of taking on in-house grass cutting of our large open spaces and maintaining our flower beds. If these look as attractive as the initial maintenance team initiative we will take steps to ensure that these responsibilities are taken in house.

Devolved Services



The Town Council entered into an agreement with the Buckinghamshire County Council on the 11th August 2010 to exercise the following functions normally carried out by the County Council:-

- Removal of fly posters and other illegal signs
- Approval of charity event advertising signage
- Cleaning of traffic signs
- Minor traffic sign repairs (e.g. fixing loose clips)
- Trimming vegetation obstructing pavements and footpaths
- Serving hedge cutting notices on frontages
- Checking for obstructions to pavements and footpaths.

To enter into the agreement to deliver the above

services, the Town Council had to meet a set of criteria which are some of the "benchmarks" required for obtaining Quality Status proving that it is an active, professional and competent body capable of working together with the County Council to deliver services on their behalf.

The Town Council felt it could more efficiently deal with the above services providing a faster response than the county council were able to deliver at the present time and were delighted to be given this opportunity by Buckinghamshire County Council to make a difference to the town at no extra cost to the residents.

The County Council will reimburse the Town Council for the cost of doing this work up to a maximum of £15,000.00 per annum.

Town Overview

I hope that many of you have appreciated the abundance of colour in the town this year, the flower beds and tubs looked fantastic and judging by feedback from people visiting the town it did look very presentable. This is one area of the council's work that has an obvious visual impact; it is hard to remember how drab the town looked all summer only a few years back before this council invested in flower planting in various locations. Our thanks to Windowflowers and our own maintenance team for all their efforts this year.

We appreciate the positive feedback of residents for the recent street lighting improvements; we will always try to help whenever we get requests for additional lights where it is feasible. Please continue to report promptly any outages as the lead time for repairing them can be up to 2 weeks.

Over the last three decades Princes Risborough town centre has faced challenging times when perhaps compared to other similar local communities. Many people have different views as to why this might be but some obvious reasons stand out. In comparison with other towns and villages Princes Risborough has had little growth over the last many years. Our aging population has shrunk slightly; indeed many local family homes have just one person living in them, and few new families have come into the town, whilst our own young people have fled to other areas in search of cheaper housing. We also have two major national retailing chains at either end of the High Street, who just as they have in many places around the country have taken some trade from traditional independent shops, with some closing and giving way to charity shops taking over.

The council along with many community groups recognised some years ago that action needed to be taken to reverse this situation. There has been a softening in the negative attitude towards new homes being built and as a result there are currently more than 300 new homes either completed, under construction or about to start in the parish. This will provide a welcome boost to all trading across the town and it appears not to have gone unnoticed among potential new retailers; it is understood that a top five national food retailer is trying hard to secure suitable premises in our town centre. This is perhaps some welcome news as we come out of recession.

The town centre one-way system was introduced as a way of re-generating the High Street area. The 12 month experimental order is to be reviewed in November. There is no doubt that it was unpopular with some as motorists were forced to get used to a new way of doing things. There were a number of complaints initially and some people were quick to pass judgment and call for an

immediate reversal of the scheme. We have all had 11 months to get used to the new traffic flow. Fewer complaints now come into the council, indeed the streets appear to be busy if not busier than previously. We are working with BCC on easing the sporadic queues on the Horns Lane approach, but even those queues are not as bad as they were. Things seem to be settling down as we all get used to it.

The one-way system was introduced chiefly to ease traffic flow and take out one traffic lane. If in November the scheme is made permanent then Phase II can be implemented. This will mean parking spaces in Duke Street, more spaces in the High Street, much wider pavements on the Wainwrights side of High Street enabling businesses to have 'cafe culture' style seating outside if they wish. Other features will eventually include landscaping, seating and a better bus-waiting area. A brighter new High Street with positive support will hopefully attract new businesses into the town and attract shoppers, which should in turn boost other traders.

For a number of reasons the new system did not get off to the popular start that we had hoped for and attracted too much negative publicity which has potentially caused some short-term damage to the image of the town. However those that call for a re-introduction of the old two-way traffic flow will simply take us back to square one. Long before the one way system shops were closing down and either becoming charity shops or being left empty - even four estate agents offices closed. The community told us that they wanted action taken to reverse a declining retail choice. In view of all recent events does the community want to move forward and make Risborough town centre great again, or would it like the council to change everything back to the way it was and do nothing? These are clear, tough choices and times are hard, but we are all working towards a much better Risborough, and the future is looking brighter currently than it has for decades. Please do give us your constructive feedback and we will answer any questions that you may have.

Gary Hall
Chairman of
Town & Lighting



The Future Of Day Care

Council's total opposition to the closure of the Day Care Centre



Bucks County Council (BCC) have produced a document entitled 'Having a Good Day' that encapsulates the county's ideas on how day care should be handled in the years to come. Many of you who went to the meeting at the Royal British Legion Hall on 29th July, where representatives of BCC presented these plans, may recall our MP, the Rt Hon John Bercow, arguing forcefully and eloquently against closure of the town's day care centre.

Subsequently a meeting between BCC representatives and the Town Council emphasized the difference between the aspirations and attitudes of the town and the county. At the Town Council meeting of 31st August (at which John Bercow was present throughout the whole of the meeting) the Council unanimously agreed to oppose the closure of the day care centre and to write to BCC's Cllr Patricia Birchley, the cabinet member for Adults and Family Well-being, to emphasize their opposition. We share with you the text of the Council's letter.

Dear Cllr Birchley

This is the response by Princes Risborough Town Council to your consultation document "Having a Good Day".

The Town Council were extremely dismayed that your text strongly implied that the existing facilities in Princes Risborough would be closed and the site sold to provide funds for your new proposals. The packed public meeting held at the Royal British Legion hall on 29th July was unanimous in its disapproval of your proposals. A petition signed by the vast majority of the adult population in the town and a demonstration outside the county offices emphasized the strength of feeling.

It appears to us that the proposals in "Having a Good Day" are aspirational rather than based on logic and rational thought. While much space is taken up by details of existing costs, no mention is made of the expenditure necessary to create and run the proposed new system. Your proposal that new centres are built remote from most outlying parts of the county implies that transport costs will increase significantly as will staff costs in providing support for each one of those on self-directed support (SDS) when they go out into the world. Administration costs will rise at county offices and staff numbers at hubs will increase to cater for your aspirations of their role in the new scheme. How do the sums add up "within a shrinking budget"? We understand from our MP that you have yet to give assurances that, should your plan be put into action, the finances so raised would be ring-fenced for use in adult day care. Does your reluctance imply that you are going to use some of the money raised in the sale of day centres to finance other initiatives, thus losing forever the finances needed to sustain the proper support of those needing day care?

The present support provided by the Risborough Day Centre is greatly appreciated by all who use it. Risborough has a higher-than-normal elderly population, which you admit is likely to increase substantially in the coming years. We already have a relatively large number of old people's homes and flats. Berryfield School was demolished to make way for a large old people's home and at present another 40+ flats for the elderly are being constructed in Wellington Avenue.

The existing Day Centre in Risborough is well situated, structurally sound and ideally suited to those who need its services. It should remain as it is. It would certainly be folly to sell it off (probably

to the highest bidder who would rapidly demolish it) before an alternative was established that was acceptable to the people of Risborough. The only criticism we have heard of the centre is that it is not used outside the hours of the day centre activities. This could be easily remedied by telling the town of its availability, when we are sure its facilities would be oversubscribed.

Our Day Centre is very reliant on local volunteers. They will view increased costs and travel time to new and more remote centres as a disincentive to continue support, however well-meaning and altruistic are those involved. All Town Councillors give their time for free so sympathize with and understand this problem. Hubs will be remote from Risborough and therefore not part of Risborough's friendly society. Attendees will feel confused and lack a sense of security when surrounded by large numbers of strangers who, if the drop-in ethic is pursued, will be constantly changing. Your proposal runs counter to 'The Big Society' announced by our current Prime Minister where local involvement is essential for its establishment. Most people, especially the disadvantaged, feel more comfortable and secure in familiar surroundings.

SDS may suit some, but not all of those in need of care. Your examples of how your proposed system will advantage those in need of care appear trite and superficial. No acknowledgement is made of the increased transportation costs, the inconvenience and longer time in getting to hubs, and the stress and consternation of some when asked to choose on what they wish to spend their money. The philosophy of choice is often overplayed, especially for those who find it difficult to make sensible choices or prefer the existing security of the day centres. This is true of many able residents who join clubs and societies for familiarity and security.

The A4010, which links Risborough to Aylesbury and High Wycombe is an extremely busy road, especially at commuter periods when most movements to hubs, etc would take place. At a time when the pressure on our roads has never been greater, you propose that local centres will be discontinued in preference to providing three (or two) centres in the county to which all have to travel. If our Primary Care Trust proposed closing all local GPs' surgeries in favour of just three centres in the county, would the populace believe they would be getting an improved service?

It is clear from your proposals that you anticipate Risborough would contain a community base, but where would this be established? Our limited number of community rooms and halls (you talk of leisure centres, libraries, local community centres, village halls, church halls) are already oversubscribed. Do we then have hair-washing sessions in the corner of the library? Presumably a community base is expected to be available seven days a week. Unless it becomes peripatetic and squeezes into the few hours available at various venues, this would be impossible. But how inconvenient to those who least require inconvenience.

On page 31 of your consultation document, in answer to the question "Are you closing down the day centres?" you state that "This does mean that some of the existing centres will close. However, no building will be closed without alternative arrangements being put in place." It is telling that you make no attempt to be more precise about those "alternative arrangements". However, we strongly maintain that the Risborough day centre

should not be closed, making it unnecessary to make alternative arrangements.

Princes Risborough Town Council

Parks



It does not seem five minutes since I sat at my computer writing the last Parks update. Did I tell you what a great season our local rugby team had (my memory's not what it used to be!!). I am pleased and delighted to tell you they won the league, WELL DONE BOYS, PRINCES RISBOROUGH IS PROUD OF YOU.

Just in case there is a friendly, rugby-loving farmer out there that has a spare field on his hands, they are desperate to obtain a ground that they can call their own.

With the loss of Molins Sports Ground the town has lost a bowling green, football pitch, cricket pitch and a club house which as a community facility held many a wedding reception, funeral wake, bingo, and all sorts of events.

King George V

Well as you must all have seen, we now have a "super-duper" skate park which the Town Mayor Alan Turner officially opened on Saturday 18th September. The new facility took one month to build and cost £45,000 in total, the bulk of the money coming from the council and with some additional funding from Bucks County Council. The event was a great success and the Town Council wish to thank the local businesses that contributed towards the prizes and refreshments for the day; Tesco, Bucks Boarding Centre, Extremepie.com, M&S Simply Food and Special Days. Well Done to Alfred Munday and Sam King who walked off with the top prizes on the day.

The kids are over the moon with the skate park. Councillor Pam Summerbell and I spent a good few hours with the youth of the town sorting out what they wanted. Letters went around each class at Princes Risborough School asking what style they preferred and based on those results the skate park was developed. Please enjoy the facility.

Wades Park.

The Multi-use Games Area is still as popular as ever. Another good choice by the young people of our town who picked the style and design (it pays to consult them!).

The Town Council would like to upgrade the children's play area, but this will have to be deferred until funding is available.

St. Dunstan's.

Have you seen the new young children's play equipment that was installed at the beginning of September?

It's really lovely to watch the little ones playing on it and the Town Council has received many compliments on the improvements made.

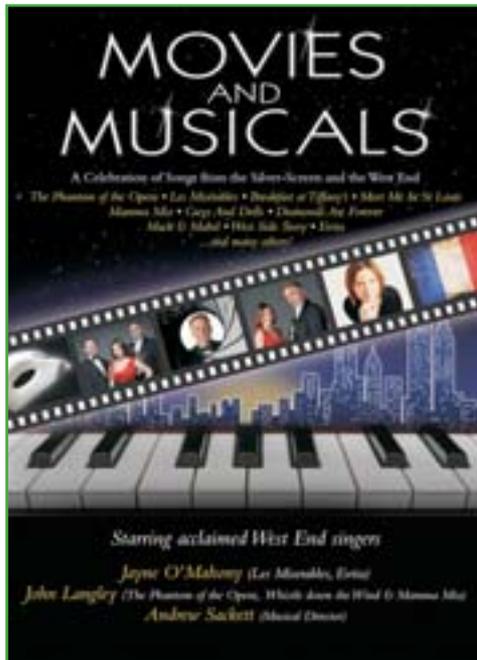
Well, that's all for now folks, just to go back to the lack of recreational facilities within our town, (I cannot help myself) I am a great believer that the

Continued over

voice of the people should be heard so wake up W.D.C. stop spending our council tax in Wycombe and Marlow, how about spending some in Princes Risborough? Ah well, enough's enough, here's hoping that we have a decent autumn.

Councillor Eunice Clifford

New Entertainment Opportunities



The Town Council has recently been investigating the possibility of bringing new arts and entertainment opportunities to the town. To this end, two new entertainment ventures are being provided, one as a one-off performance and the other as a regular event.

Community Cinema

This regular event was launched on the 9th

October at the Community Centre in Stratton Road with the film 'Up', a Disney Pixar production about a young boy who accompanies an old man on a fantastical journey in a house kept aloft by a host of multicoloured balloons.

Each month on the second Saturday the Cinema will show a family film on two large screens and there will also be a refreshment kiosk at each performance.

All the films to be shown will be of a similar style so that all the family can attend and there will be an opportunity at a later date for the public to decide on a future film from a list of those available.

The cinema is being run by a group of local community volunteers, and is supported financially by the Town Council, ably assisted by U3A and the Town Festival, who are providing the equipment on which the films are screened.

The ticket charges have deliberately been kept low so as to encourage as many families as possible to attend. To that end we will be charging £8.00 for a family of four (2 adults-2 children), £3.50 for an adult and concessions of £2.50 for adults over 60 years and children under 16 years of age.

Tickets are only available on the door and all the performances start at 7.00pm and last for a maximum of 2 hours. The doors open at 6.30pm and the refreshment kiosk will stay open during the performance.

For more details see the Town Council website or contact the Town Council on 01844 275912.

Movies and Musicals

On 20th November we are welcoming a musical evening by a pair of West End singers, along with their musical director, to the Community Centre for a performance of 'Movies and Musicals'.

This performance will be a one-off and is supported by Theatre in the Villages a collaboration between Wycombe District and Aylesbury Vale District Councils, along with Princes Risborough Town Council.

This will be an evening of favourite classic songs from Movies, Shows and Musicals in a presentation

by West End principal singers Jayne O'Mahony (Evita, Les Miserables) and John Langley (Phantom of the Opera, Whistle down the Wind, Mamma Mia), accompanied at the piano by Musical Director Andrew Sackett.

The evening will begin at 7.30pm and tickets will be £8.00 each, with concessions, and a full bar and refreshments will be available.

Tickets are available from the Town Council office or Risborough Area Information Office, Horns Lane.

Princes Risborough Christmas Lights



The Princes Risborough Town Festival Committee has announced the Christmas lights switch on will be held on Friday 3rd December from 6pm.

Although plans are still taking shape we can expect church and school choirs, a visit from Santa and some celebrities from the Wycombe Swan pantomime to switch the lights on and officially start the Christmas period.

We also hope for a bumper turn out of local stallholders to fill the High Street to complete the festive scene.

If you wish to take part or require more information then please contact Anne Phillips at dphillips371@tiscali.co.uk or on by phone on 01844 344371, or Richard Stevenson on 01844 273763 or by e mail on richlin7@hotmail.com

Please note the normal road closure will be from 3pm to 9pm

How and Who to Contact

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Please visit our website: www.princesrisborough.com

Mayor & Chairman of the Council:

Cllr. Alan Turner

Deputy Chairman & Chairman of Finance Cttee:

Cllr. Reg Orsler

Chairman of Admin & HR Cttee:

Cllr. A Turner

Chairman of Memorial Garden Management Cttee:

Cllr. Pamela Williams

Chairman of Parks Cttee:

Cllr. Eunice Clifford

Chairman of Planning Cttee:

Cllr. Ben Benifer

Chairman of Public Relations Cttee:

Cllr. John Coombs

Chairman of Town and Lighting Cttee:

Cllr. Gary Hall

Councillors

Cllr. Bill Bendyshe-Brown

Cllr. Carl Etholen

Cllr. Will Streule

Cllr. Dennis Green

Cllr. Pam Summerbell

Cllr. Wally Woolf

Clerk to the Council: Sue Griffiths **Assistant to the Clerk:** Kirsty Pope

Clerical Assistants: Sue Bowdrey and Mark Whiteman

NEW Office Opening hours: Monday to Friday 10.00am – 3.00pm

The full Town Council meets at 7.15pm on the last Tuesday of each month at The Chapter House, St Mary's Church. There is a 10-minute slot at the beginning of each meeting when the public can express a view or concern relating to town matters. Please check the website to confirm time and venue. The next meetings are:

Tuesday October 26th

Tuesday November 30th

The Town Council aims to be as accessible as possible, and welcomes the views, comments and concerns of the Princes Risborough electorate. Although the views of the whole Council are given wherever possible, for constitutional and legal reasons we must state that the views expressed here in Crosstalk, and in any personal correspondence received from individual Councillors, are those of the author concerned and do not necessarily express the opinions or policy of PRTC unless explicitly stated.