

## Chairman's Report

I want to take a few moments to think about what we have achieved during the first twelve months of WFAC's official existence since last year's inaugural Annual General Meeting.

At last year's AGM we agreed WFAC's Constitution which from that point became the official rules under which we operate. Prior to that many of us had come together informally as a group with a shared vision of what we wanted to create for the benefit of all villagers, in terms of new sports and leisure facilities and a new community building. Whilst it would be easy to focus on the new Parish Council owned field on the Milton Road we agreed that the Lucy Placket field was a core part of our plans and must not be forgotten.

Our shared vision back then was well summarised in the Vote YES leaflet we put together for the Parish Poll. In the days prior to WFAC's formalisation we highlighted that our vision was more than just adult football; it featured space for activities for the primary school, a netball area, dedicated pitches for lots of different sports, opportunities for young people to play sports locally and a modern community building for everyone – a building to compliment existing venues.

When the "yes" vote won the Parish Poll we volunteered to work with the Parish Council; to show willing, roll up our sleeves and get involved with the creation of our vision. We wanted a project such as this to bring the divided community back together. One of my original goals was to try to win over the people living closest to the Milton Road site by proving to them we did want to protect their interests, surroundings, property and way of life. I wanted to disprove all the negative rubbish that had been peddled by a tiny handful of nimbys. I was not alone in this goal; other WFAC members have spoken to me on a number of occasions during the last year with similar thoughts.

We agreed a three phase plan with Adderbury Parish Council and signed-up to work with them on phase one of that. It is important to note that at the end of phase one either side, WFAC or Adderbury Parish Council could decide it did not wish to undertake any further activities together. The vision of phase one was that two groups would be created to work alongside each other. One group would research the need and gather information, both within the village and externally. We agreed the key stakeholders, those that needed to be consulted and the research visits that needed to be made. The second group would look at the finances, both in terms of the capital project and the ongoing viability. The output from both groups would feed into an overview report, which once approved by a majority of WFAC members, would be given to Adderbury Parish Council. This would lead Parish Councillors into deliberations as to how to proceed with phase 2, and whether those plans might include WFAC.

A lot of work was completed by these two groups, one of which was led by Keith Mitchell and the second I led in the absence of any other volunteers. Many members were involved at this stage and I would like to thank them all, but I would like to give special mention to both Keith and Pam Haynes who put some considerable time and effort into their work.

A third "Start-up" group was also created with a view to linking the work already commissioned by the Parish Council into the work of the WFAC project. I would like to thank Diane Bratt for agreeing to chair this group.

Fund raising was always envisaged as something that would be part of the phase 2 activity. However, knowing how much work was needed in this area Jackie Head was keen to get started and we must acknowledge the considerable effort by Jackie and her team to date in creating some fantastic fund-raising opportunities at events like the Aunt Agatha's teas, the bingo and quiz nights

and community day. One of the big fund raisers still to happen is the Ball later this year, on which Kate Gibbins has worked extremely hard.

So where are we now? The Parish Council were keen that our report be presented ahead of this summer; in fact at one stage an Easter target was mentioned. In an effort to hit the summer deadline the input from the sub-groups was compiled into the report that was presented to members at the start of June. At that meeting the proposals were agreed by the vast majority of WFAC Members present. From here the plan had been that the Trustees agreed the path for report production over the summer, with presentation (hopefully in September) leading to the conclusion of phase one.

This was where the problems started. At the same time the Parish Council had applied for change of use planning permission for the Milton Road site. As the Parish Council Chairman told me on one occasion the planning application was a Parish Council matter and nothing to do with WFAC. So the Parish Council ended up creating its own view of the Milton Road site that didn't match that of WFAC's members. So rather than us conclude phase one as planned a number of "interesting" meetings have pushed us towards re-considering, re-evaluating, re-thinking and re-working. Because the depth of information now being sought is effectively phase two work the boundaries have been blurred. At September's Parish Council meeting when asked by Councillor Tony Gill about the two differing views of the layout of the Milton Road site the Parish Council Chair was clear in her stance that only one layout would be considered and that was the layout created by the Parish Council for their planning application.

So today I find myself questioning what role WFAC has to play in this project. I question how closely WFAC's original aims match those of Adderbury Parish Council. Indeed there are now fractures within WFAC and I'm not sure even WFAC's members have an agreed vision that all members will stand by. Adderbury Parish Council certainly doesn't have a shared vision.

Recently I have found it more and more difficult to Chair this group ensuring it continues to operate with the open, honest and transparent goals we set ourselves. During the last few months I have spent far too long addressing issues from WFAC members who feel they have been ignored, belittled or simply not consulted properly.

You will recall I mentioned earlier that from outside the WFAC membership I had wanted to reach out to those living closest to the areas of our project work to try to work with them. You will never win over people who don't agree with you if you don't make the effort to reach out to them. But I don't believe reaching out to a person worried about drainage issues is simply telling them there is a report they can read on Cherwell District Council's planning pages. This isn't good enough and this is an area where I and some other WFAC Members disagree with the approach of Adderbury Parish Council.

So for this reason I am not comfortable continuing in the role of Chairman and have told the Trustees I will not be standing again.

In my opinion it would be a terrible situation if WFAC allowed itself to simply become a front for the Parish Council to push through its vision of the future. WFAC is not a working group of the Parish Council; we are a separate entity that has values and if these don't agree with the Parish Council then we should have the strength of character to say so, and if necessary walk away.

It is also vital WFAC does not allow itself to simply become a fund raising group. That again would be a failure of our original objectives.

It will be for the Trustees appointed tonight to carry the WFAC Membership forward but I trust they will do this bearing the following three items in mind:

- WFAC's trustees are not elected representatives, they are simply appointed to ensure WFAC operates correctly. When decisions are to be made then the decision must lay with the total membership. The Trustees are free to make recommendations but not the decision on behalf of the total membership.
- WFAC needs to address why it is not making better inroads into the community and signing up new members. The last few months have seen far too much time keeping existing members onboard with little opportunity to recruit fresh blood.
- The Trustees need to revisit how they are going to complete phase one with any change in the agreed stance being taken back to the full membership before presentation to the Parish Council. From here any offer from the Parish Council to work through phase two of the project needs to be carefully considered by both sides to ensure it suits both Councillors and the full WFAC membership. (This is an area I think we failed to fully establish when we agreed to take on phase one of the project.) It would be worth doing this and referring back to what we wanted to achieve when we persuaded the village to vote "yes".

I wish them the best of luck.