

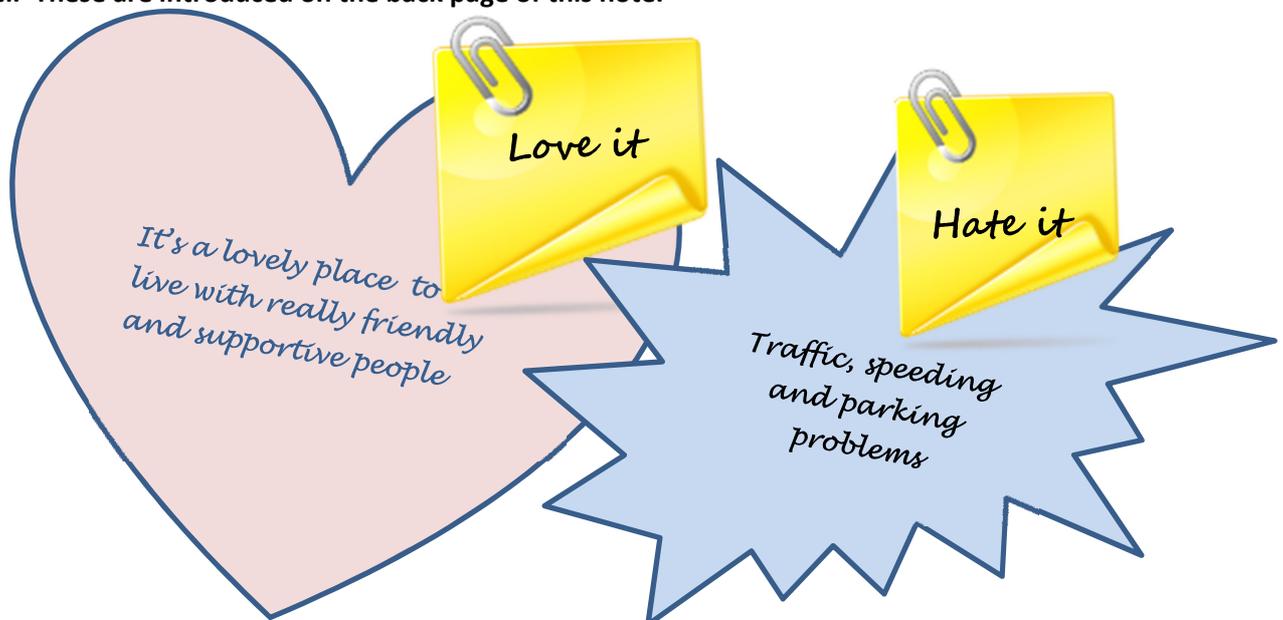


# Watlington Speaks

Watlington Speaks was launched in 2008 with the aim of finding out what the community wanted for Watlington. We did not aim to produce a formal Community Plan but intended to give an opportunity to residents and those who use the facilities of the town to make their opinions known. The results would be used by the Parish Council and other organisations as a guide to local priorities to aid future planning.

A variety of methods was used to gather information from people of all ages and interests in the town. These included open “Love-it – Hate it” surveys to identify issues of interest or concern, as well as a more structured questionnaire sent to all homes. The questionnaire results were reported statistically and are supported by collected lists of all the comments and suggestions received. This leaflet aims to provide an overview of results and of the progress that has been made in addressing them.

This note completes the Watlington Speaks project, but opens the discussions for the future development of Watlington in the light of changes that have taken place at national government level. These are introduced on the back page of this note.



Watlington Speaks was funded by a grant from Oxfordshire Rural Community Council. We gratefully acknowledge this support and the invaluable assistance provided by Anton Nath and other ORCC staff over the period during which this project was running. Watlington Parish Council also acknowledges the team of volunteers including Caroline Lye, Linda Nicholson, Julia Heyworth and Adrian Garside who willingly devoted hours of their time to achieving the positive results reported here.

## Community and facilities

**WPC Successes:** New events calendar included on WPC website; improved cleaning regime for public toilets and refurbishment planned for 2012; WPC news emailed monthly to all who request it; adult exercise equipment added at recreation ground.

**Community successes:** Requests for café / tearoom have been met by the very popular enlarged Bread Bin (a commercial decision); a U3A branch is thriving, but wish for evening classes for all ages not yet covered.

**And a huge success:** A volunteer driver service for trips to hospital appointments has been initiated by Watlington Speaks and has now been providing a valuable service for two years

**No progress:** Volunteers to establish and run theatre group or film club, or to organise poetry, art or music events have not been found.

**Under threat:** More activities for young people have not been achieved and the long established Youth Club is now under threat because of County funding cuts.

## Traffic and transport

**Parking:** 47% of respondents think parking in Watlington is adequate, but others have significant problems. Short term parking spaces have been created in the Hill Road car park and High Street, but parking for short stay shoppers is still difficult at some times of the day. Long stay parking facilities at the Church Hall and the recreation ground have not attracted many users.

**Public Transport:** WPC has lobbied hard for improved bus services with mixed success. Services to Oxford, Thame, Wallingford and Reading have all been retained although with reduced frequency and some changes in route. A new community bus service has preserved the Junction 6 link and filled the gap left by the axing of late night services to Oxford.

**Speeding:** Again only limited success – speeds through town have been monitored by OCC on several occasions. Only in Christmas Common has this shown sufficient

evidence of speeding for OCC to take action, but cuts in the OCC budget have delayed introduction of speed control measures there. Requests for a 20 mph speed limit in the centre of town were rejected by OCC until their pilot studies in Oxford and Henley have been completed. A subsequent suggestion that the Parish Council installs its own 20 mph signs has been deferred as speed surveys in the town in early 2011 showed an average speed in the High Street of 18.2mph. It was noted that with the level of speeds recorded OCC will not lower the speed limit in the Town to 20mph.

*• 43% said their needs were very well catered for, and another 49% said our facilities were satisfactory*  
*• High Street fairs were very popular with 83% wanting the Christmas Fair and 74% wanting the May Festival*

## Environment

**Safety:** Most people feel safe in Watlington, but there were concerns related to traffic. These include HGV traffic through town; speed of passing vehicles; narrow pavements in need of repair; and the need for pedestrian crossings for Cuxham and Britwell Roads. WPC has pressured OCC on all of these points, and some have been accepted as needing attention and have been monitored. As yet, most remain unresolved or have been rejected by OCC as not possible.

**Cleanliness:** About half of respondents see litter as a problem, with education and more bins being the most favoured solutions.

Dog fouling has a similarly high score, with education of owners being a clear favourite. WPC now has a full time caretaker who has improved cleanliness of town centre areas considerably. The Watlington in Bloom group have introduced regular litter picks for parts of town not covered by the caretaker. Icknield College has reduced the litter in its grounds and playing fields.

*• 95% felt safe in daylight and 75% safe after dark*  
*• Views on street and footpath lighting were mixed with 28% wanting more lighting but 39% who wanted no change*

## Sport, recreation and leisure

Questions about sports facilities raised generally low responses for any of the changes suggested. The most positive was use of a gym where less than 50% of respondents said they would be regular or occasional users. About 20% expressed an interest in using the Icknield College facilities or in joining organised swimming trips to local pools, but no-one has come forward to lead a group. There remains an on-going interest in a swimming pool for Watlington. (This was rejected as unaffordable some years back.)

