

August 2019



Will this be the biggest thing on the horizon? Architect's impression of the proposed St Cloud Gate scheme (see page 5)

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The Chairman's Page

Wheels are in motion for drawing up a masterplan for Maidenhead town centre.

A consultative group involving community representatives will be set up to run the project, under the aegis of RBWM managing director Duncan Sharkey.

The move comes after months of lobbying by the Civic Society and others. Since well before the demise of the Partnership for the Rejuvenation of Maidenhead (PRoM) we've been asking the council for their vision of the future. What would be the effect of all the development currently planned for the town? And what was being done to prepare for it?

In response there's been a succession of presentations and exhibitions extolling the virtues the individual sites. The likes of York Road, West Street, the Magnet site and the golf course, we were asked to believe, will deliver the much-needed new homes.

But there's been little or no discussion about the impact of all these redevelopments, or the key question: what will Maidenhead town centre look and feel like in 10 to 15 years' time?

We thought we had an answer in 2011 when the Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) was adopted. But the ink on the document was barely dry before it was being smudged by political imperatives, like relaxed restrictions on building heights and unrealistic pledges for preserving the Green Belt.

Current development proposals would see Maidenhead's population increase 45% by 2033. What will that mean for traffic, infrastructure, services, leisure, arts and culture?

These are the questions a masterplan should answer.

In our last Newsletter I wrote warmly about the public consultation process employed by the new owners of Nicholson's in determining a way forward for the shopping centre. I hope similar participatory planning methods can be used in the masterplanning exercise.

Meanwhile, I'm delighted that the architect who devised and ran the Nicholson's exercise, Charles Campion, will be coming to talk about the importance of public engagement in planning at our AGM in November.

Tea for the Town Centre

To continue the above theme, it is pleasing to be able to report that nearly 50 Society members and friends gathered to hear Barbara Richardson talk about the council's plans for town centre regeneration at our second 'Theme Tea' in June.

As managing director of the Royal Borough's Property Company, Ms Richardson is responsible for delivering the council's property strategy. One of their aims is to create, own and manage 1,000 new homes within 10 years and she outlined plans for the council owned sites in the town.

Asked whether the council had a vision for the town centre in future, she replied that this was being worked on. Some initial work had been done with stakeholder involvement to develop a brand "Make Maidenhead" and a video had been produced.

"The council are now doing follow-on work that will create a Vision for everyone to understand and hopefully get excited about," she said.

"It's clear that we need something that makes Maidenhead different from Windsor, or Ascot or other parts of the Borough. What does Maidenhead have, or will it have, that gives it its USP? I personally believe that this is leisure, culture and arts but we will see what comes out of the next stage of consultation and work."

Let's hope this is sooner rather than later!

Bob Dulson

Time for a Change!

The Society is looking for a new chairman, following Bob Dulson's decision to stand down after eleven years in the role.

"If the Society is to be as effective in the future as it has been for the past 60 years, it needs new direction and energy," said Bob. "It's time for change."

At their July meeting members of the Executive Committee agreed to publish the "job description" reproduced overleaf. Anyone interested in applying should contact Bob in the



first instance. It is expected that the new post holder will take over at the AGM in November.

Chairman's role

Maidenhead Civic Society is seeking an enthusiastic advocate for the preservation and enhancement of Maidenhead to be its new chairman. This is an important voluntary role that would suit someone with an interest in planning, environment and the local community. No specific qualifications are required, apart from an energy, passion and belief in making Maidenhead a better place, though some experience of chairing committees or public meetings would be useful.

MCS was founded in 1960 to give a voice to the community on planning matters and that remains its primary focus. The Society aims to encourage public appreciation of the place we call home by promoting high standards in both the built and the natural environment. More broadly, the Society's interests and activities encompass: Amenity and Environmental Issues, Planning Matters, Projects, Campaigns and Social Events. Over the years, our achievements have included:

- Creating Guards Club Park (1978)
- Initiating the formation of PRoM which produced the Town Centre Area Action Plan (2011)
- Founding the Heritage Centre (1992)
- Devising the Green Way (1985) and Millennium Walk (2000)

We are currently involved in drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan for Maidenhead and, having been a leading advocate of the footbridge linking Boulters with the Taplow bank, we are devising a Leisure Strategy for Riverside. The Society has also published studies on notable local Grade 1 listed buildings and was an early proponent of the Maidenhead Waterways project.

Entirely independent and firmly apolitical, Maidenhead Civic Society is a registered charity, affiliated to Civic Voice, the national charity for civic societies in England.

A key function for the new chair will be raising the Society's profile to attract new members. He or she will also be expected to:

- Coordinate the work of the Planning, Projects and Events & Membership groups
- Foster and maintain links with council members and officers
- Liaise with local stakeholders and amenity groups, e.g. Chamber of Commerce, East Berks Ramblers and other Civic Societies
- Be the main spokesperson and represent the Society on other bodies and at events and functions

Planning Matters

The Planning Group has continued with the monthly review of "applications of interest" with about forty proposals reviewed in detail over the past three months. Comments have been submitted on about one third of those applications. Every month the weekly planning lists from RBWM are checked through and presented in a monthly agenda. Since I took on the role of Planning Group Chair in 2007 the agenda has been prepared by Rudi Sheldon. He was probably doing likewise before I arrived. For the first four or five years we were privileged to have the original files, with all documents and plans, which Rudi would collect in the afternoon from the Town Hall – to be returned first thing next morning. However, since about 2012 the applications have all been reviewed online through the Planning Portal, with the Planning Group trying to read and compare existing and proposed plans on a TV linked to a computer. The old way was much easier. The reason I am relating this background is because, as most members will know, Rudi's beloved wife Ady passed away since our last newsletter. We extend our condolences to Rudi, together with our appreciation of his ongoing support for the Planning Group.

The biggest development proposed recently is **St Cloud Gate**. This is a planned office block on the North East quadrant of the Cookham Road/St Cloud Way/Market Street roundabout. The existing three-storey block is to be demolished, to be replaced with a "nine"-storey Grade A office block. However, every time you count the number of floors on the elevation drawings you come up with eleven storeys.



Illustrative aerial view of the proposed St Cloud Gate scheme

This location is visually very prominent (see image on front cover) and this block is a stand-alone tower which will dominate the street scene. Immediately to the north are the Grade 2 listed buildings housing doctors' surgeries which will be literally overshadowed by the north elevation of St Cloud Gate.

The proposed Countryside development on the Magnet site has an indicative height of five to six storeys, which is the height of the recently completed Kidwells Park flats on the west side of Cookham Road. Furthermore, the Area Action Plan for tall buildings in the Town Centre restricted them to the south side of St Cloud Way. It must be pointed out that The Point on the opposite quadrant of the roundabout is nine storeys high, but is part of a run of three high blocks ending with Premier Inn. In spite of its merits – employment opportunities, restaurant facilities and improved access and parking – this is an undesirable proposal. It is too high, visually intrusive and on the wrong side of the road. The visuals provided within the application illustrate how dominant the building will appear when driving eastwards from Castle Hill roundabout.

There is an application to convert the first and second floors of 110 to 114 High Street – **The Old Post Office** – into twelve apartments. Permission has already been granted for conversion into ten flats, but the developer thinks that they can squeeze another two flats out of the project. Consequently, the new proposal has 8 out of 12 flats which are under the minimum living space approved standards. Whilst we had no problem with the approved scheme for 10 flats, we believe that the Borough should not approve dwellings that are below the National Described Space Standard.

Another example of overdevelopment of a site exists at **31 to 33 Belmont** Road, previously occupied by a property known as Gwynant. This has featured in previous Newsletters and is a large vacant site with a planning history going back years. Initially, there was a proposal for two blocks of five apartments, making a total of ten. Also an application for four 4-bed houses, and a number of applications for 7 flats, all refused. Since 2008 permission has been granted – and subsequently on six separate occasions – for two detached houses on the site. However, dreams of overdevelopment persist and the developer is currently again proposing a total of seven apartments in two blocks, in spite of losing an appeal for a similar scheme in January 2018. It is disheartening, when an available site lies dormant for years because the developer chooses not to implement extant permission. As you are aware, there is an oversupply of flats in our town, with nearly 50% of new planning permissions over the last 5 years being for flatted developments.

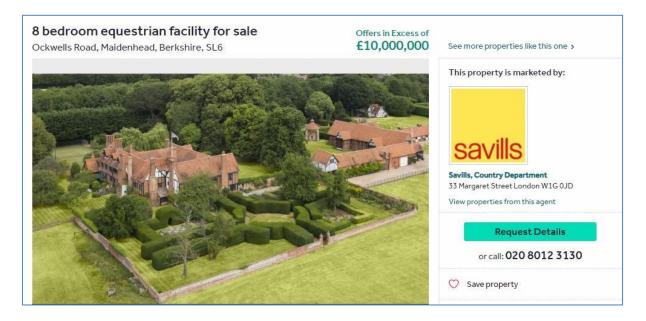
In the last Newsletter we referred to the current practice of converting surplus office blocks into residential accommodation. Currently, we have identified at least six blocks where this is happening in Maidenhead. As these conversions are carried out under Permitted Development rights, they tend to have undersized flats to maximize the number of dwelling units. You will be pleased to hear that the practice is being called into question as a recent national report designated such conversions as the potential "slums of the future". Whilst central government has many other issues to deal with, it is hoped that legislation to exert more control over office to residential will be forthcoming.

The **Maidenhead Neighbourhood Forum** has now been constituted with a total of 23 members. As there is always the risk of people dropping out – and we are required a minimum of 21 members – we are still looking for interested individuals to join us in drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan for Maidenhead. Ideally, another four or five members would give us some latitude. Although the Forum is well represented by members of the Civic Society, please consider whether you could add your views and experience to that of the existing team. Please contact me by email if you are interested (martinjmcnamee@yahoo.co.uk).

Martin McNamee

Projects

Ockwells Manor: longstanding members will remember a concert in the tithe barn, a tour of the house itself and when the grounds were open for the Open Garden scheme, our exhibition on its history in the tithe barn. We are grateful to the current owner, Mr Brian Stein for allowing us this access. However the house is now on the market for sale for a cool $\pounds 10$ million.



We hope that it finds a new owner able and willing to conserve this house that is of great historic and aesthetic importance. We believe it should be in the ownership of either the National Trust or English Heritage. The Trust will only take it as a gift with an endowment and English Heritage say they only take on houses that are ruinous which this one isn't. In 1892, when the house was to be sold, bidding reached £22,500 and was then withdrawn, prompting the auctioneer to wish somebody had the "patriotism to purchase the property and present the house to the nation as a specimen of what an English house had been and should be". Let us hope!

The Millennium Walk Battlemead Common – a progress report

Oh for the halcyon days of February 2019 when I note from the Newsletter that I said that "another missing link in the Millennium Walk, from the Lower Cookham Road to the River Thames will be created this year thanks to the recent purchase by the Royal Borough of 110 acres of White Place Farm"!

Bob Dulson and I attended in June an extremely disappointing inaugural meeting of the Friends of Battlemead Common (attendance 35 with 8 apologies!) I gave a presentation about the Millennium Walk, including past efforts by us and East Berks Ramblers (EBRA) to create a path which would follow the 1934 boundary line of Maidenhead allowing both Millennium and Boundary Walk (a signed route) to run together as they do from Pinkneys Green. However, this requires crossing the bridge over the White Brook into the East Field and the draft Masterplan for the new common only dealt with the North and West fields; the East field, where the path would go, may possibly be fenced off from public access "for further study".

More fences have been proposed for Battlemead Common

- inside the recently planted hedge alongside the Thames Path (as people have been going through the hedge) – in situ as of 18th July;

- along the northern border of the East Field to channel walkers across the common from the Thames Path - the fence and access gate not yet in place as of 18th July;

- around the east side of the West field and across the entrance to the very large bridge over the White Brook that leads onto the causeway in the East Field – not yet in place (we hope this fence won't happen!)

Thanks to the green lobby, the habitat requirements of overwintering birds, prominent among which is the beloved Canada goose, transcend those of the public wanting open space. A further ecological study is now deemed necessary to see if any birds were missed by the last ecological study. Nature England may be encouraging public access to the nation's nature reserves but not the Royal Borough.

We agree that people should be able to experience and enjoy nature, but we'd also like them to be able to enjoy walking across the East Field while enjoying the panoramic views including Cliveden whenever they want to.

The draft Masterplan did give dispensation for the Boundary Walk, organised by Maidenhead Rotary for October, to cross the bridge and causeway to reach the Thames Path. This being incompatible with fencing off said bridge, the Rotary Club have been persuaded to direct the 2019 walkers to follow a new fenced path along the northern border of Battlemead Common which means walkers at the end of a 14-mile route are being asked to walk further and in the wrong direction. Our experience from 2006 to 2012, when we cleared a path across alongside the flood bund and completely because through the willow fields, (now closed off of badgers/foxes/muntjac deer/"otters" (i.e. mink)/tall trees that might fall etc!), is that Boundary Walkers will be tired when they get this far. We will try to persuade the Royal Borough to use our route for the Boundary Walk in 2019.

You will be able to visit the new common when it opens, possibly in August, and will be able to walk on specially mown paths in the West Field and North Field, needed as all are now hayfields! The East Field may be out of bounds in which case you will be able to peer over the fence that will close off the *very large* bridge and if so you will be able to see the "wetland" which when I saw it in June was developing a covering of blanket weed, with *water birds notably absent* except for a family of mallards. By late July the weed had begun to die off leaving a white deposit. If you don't know what blanket weed (filamentous algae) looks like have a look in the Chapel Arches basin or see below.





Above: July: blanket weed in very shallow water in the East Field of Battlemead Common; as the water dries out, the weed dies leaving a white deposit (to left of photo)

Left: June: patches of blanket weed developing

So, the saga of obtaining a path that follows Maidenhead's 1934 boundary from the Lower Cookham Road to the Thames continues; after all, the local community has only been trying since 1973! Let's hope the motto for Battlemead Common, coined by Steve Gillions, Footpath Secretary of EBRA – "A place that works for wildlife and people" – proves a true description.

St Georges Chapel, Windsor, Illustrated Guides

I'm sure you have visited St Georges Chapel, as I have lots of times, and have craned your neck to look at the roof bosses, peered at the stall plates recording the Knights of the Garter in the chancel, and marvelled at the carving of the desk fronts while wondering what the misericords (ledges under the seat where weary clergy could rest) looked like. Well help is at hand!

The Dean and Canons of Windsor have published beautifully illustrated guides for Roof Bosses, Stall Plates and Woodwork. Your committee decided these guides (*displayed below*) were important enough, particularly in view of the Society's heritage studies, that a copy of each of them should be available for study in Maidenhead and so have donated copies to our library.





If you would like to have a look at them go to Maidenhead Library and ask for the key to the glass cabinet in the Local Studies Room. All three can be found at the left hand side of the bottom shelf. The Stall Plates guide, which is in loose leaf form, also contains our Civic Society reports: *Stall Plates of Garter Knights linked to Buildings in Berkshire* and *Heraldry used on Roof Bosses in St George's Chapel – Badges of York & Lancaster*. Copies of the St Georges guides should be available in the chapel shop. The Woodwork and Stall Bosses guides are each £20 while the guide to the Stall Plates in £60.

Ann Darracott

Friends of Stanley's

Some of our longer-standing members may recall that in September 2008 we visited the Stanley Spencer Gallery in Cookham for talk on the life of the artist and a private viewing of the gallery. And then in April 2011, our own Michael Johnson gave a talk at the gallery on Spencer's work as a WW1 war artist. Here, Dick Brealey of the Friends of the Stanley Spencer Gallery tells us more about the special exhibition to mark the 60th anniversary of Spencer's death, and more about the work of the Friends.



Stanley Spencer was one of the foremost British artists of the 20th century. His name became synonymous with Cookham. the village where he lived for much of his life. Cookham was for Spencer the "Village in Heaven," and it formed the setting for his visionary religious paintings that fused together everyday village life and biblical events. Although he is best known for these religious paintings, Spencer's work includes beautifully

detailed landscapes and portraits as well as autobiographical scenes. Common to all this work is a sense of gentle humanity and optimism.

At the start of the 20th century a small Wesleyan chapel stood at the end of Cookham

High Street and it was here that the young Stanley Spencer came with his family every week to worship. Shortly after his death in 1959 the thendisused Wesleyan chapel was converted into a gallery to acquire and exhibit his paintings. It is a small, but skilfully designed, facility that houses one of the largest collections of Spencer's work, and is visited by about 15,000 visitors a year.

The works on display change every six months. In the winter exhibitions (November to March) works are largely drawn from the Gallery's own collection. Summer Exhibitions (April to October) show works lent by major galleries and private owners to illustrate themes from the artist's life and work. To mark the 60th anniversary of Spencer's death, the current exhibition, *Point and Counterpoint*, sets a selection of his works alongside those of a stellar



cast of his contemporary artists.

The Stanley Spencer Gallery is a Charitable Trust and is run entirely by volunteers. It is self-supporting and receives no endowment. Crucial to its success, therefore, is the support of the Friends, a group of more than 500 supporters. Their subscriptions help to finance new acquisitions by Stanley Spencer, and contribute towards the conservation of the collection and improvements in the facilities. For example, last year the Friends helped to fund a project to conserve the Gallery's large collection of Spencer's drawings. In addition, Friends assist in running the Gallery, such as by serving as custodians to welcome visitors. In return for this support Friends benefit from unlimited free admission to the Gallery's exhibitions. There are also special Friends' events including previews of the exhibitions and an annual talk and meeting in March. There are outings to art exhibitions and places of artistic or architectural interest. This year a group of Friends have visited the John Lewis Heritage Centre in Cookham and the Augustus John exhibition in Salisbury. A quarterly newsletter keeps Friends up-to-date on what is happening in the Gallery and on upcoming events.

If you would like to know more about the Friends of the Stanley Spencer Gallery, please email friendschair@stanleyspencer.org.uk.



Festival time again!

Maidenhead's annual summer festival was held over the weekend of July 20/21. The Society was again present to promote our visions for the town and this year we were able to exhibit our new and updated information display panels.

Forthcoming Events

An Invitation to our third 'THEME TEA' Wednesday 16th October 2019

So far our series of 'Theme Teas' have been very stimulating and for our third 'Theme Tea' we have invited a member of the Recycling and Waste Strategy team to bring us up to date on current practice of this department of the Royal Borough. We are pleased to be able to confirm that Kathryn Best – Marketing Manager, Recycling and Waste Strategy and Commissioning for RBWM – will be our guest speaker.

This talk coincides with a change of provider. From September, Serco Environment Services will be responsible for delivering a range of services for the next eight years. Cllr Gerry Clark, RBWM's lead member for sustainability, waste services and economic development, confirmed that Serco have a commitment to reducing carbon emissions and making recycling easier for the residents, while maintaining weekly collections. They also plan a range of new initiatives which will help encourage and make it easier for residents to recycle. The recent TV programme 'War on Plastics' with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Anita Rani highlighted the problems of recycling and the current difficulties faced by local authorities in dealing with the vast amounts of waste which we drop into bins daily. Should we have a national policy for how we dispose of waste and recycling instead of each local authority devising its own system? Are you confused about what we can put in the recycling bin? Where should we send our plastic items? Please come along and share your views.

The place to come is Holy Trinity Parish Centre, Cookham, SL6 9SW, starting at 3pm. To cover costs there will be a charge of \pounds 7.00 per person. To reserve your place please contact Joyce Delasalle and send your cheque, made payable to Maidenhead Civic Society, to 7 Laxton Green, Cox Green, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 3HW, by Wednesday 9th October 2019. There is ample parking and non-members will be welcome.

Reminder: 'JAZZ BY THE RIVERSIDE' featuring *The Fabulous Shirtlifters* Saturday 14th September 2019, at Maidenhead Rowing Club

Have you booked a place at this musical event? If the answer is 'NO' fill in the form at the back of May Newsletter and invite a group of friends to join you! It only costs $\pounds 15.00$ per head and all you need to do is bring along a picnic, sit back and enjoy the music and wit of these excellent masters of jazz, strutting their stuff at the side of the Thames in the delightful premises of Maidenhead Rowing Club, with glorious views of both iconic bridges across the river. Any drinks you require may be purchased from the Club Bar.

Doors open at 7.00pm and the concert commences at 8.00pm. Book your place now - without delay - by filling in the booking form and sending to Mike Copeland before Thursday 15th August 2019.

AGM with a speaker Wednesday 20th November 2019

The Guest Speaker will be Charles Campion RIBA, Partner at JTP (the new developers of Nicholsons Centre) who will speak about 'Participatory Planning'. Further details will appear in the next edition of the Newsletter.

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Society members may also be interested in the following talks organised by local history and archaeology groups:

Maidenhead Archaeological & Historical Society (MAHS)

(Talks held the Maidenhead Community Centre, 42 York Road, Maidenhead SL6 1SH; 7.45 for 8pm; visitors £3; contact 01628 630924 for talks, and 01628 629614 for outings)

Wednesday September 25th: Talk by Jill Eyers: "British Volcanoes"

Wednesday October 30th: Talk by Jenny Mallin: "A Grandmother's Legacy – a British Raj Family"

Marlow Archaeology (MAS)

(Talks held at the Liston Hall, Marlow, SL7 1DD; £4.50 non-members; contact 01628 523896)

Thursday 12th September 2019, 8pm: Anglo-Saxon Estates and Defences: thoughts on Wessex and the Thames Valley, talk by Leslie Webster, former Keeper, Dept of Prehistory & Europe, British Museum (jointly with AiM).

Thursday 24th October 2019, 8pm: *Roman Roads in Britain*, talk by Paddy Lambert. Thursday 14th November 2019, 8pm: *Beacons of the Past – Hill Forts in the Chilterns Landscape*, talk by Ed Peveler (jointly with AiM).

Archaeology in Marlow (AiM)

(Talks held at the Liston Hall, Marlow, SL7 1DD; £4.50 non-members; contact 01628 485961)

Thursday 12th September 2019, 8pm: Anglo-Saxon Estates and Defences: thoughts on Wessex and the Thames Valley, talk by Leslie Webster, former Keeper, Dept of Prehistory & Europe, British Museum (jointly with MAS).

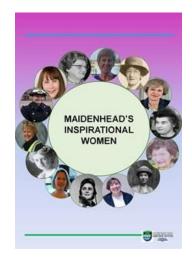
Thursday 17th October 2019, 8pm: *Bucks Archaeological Sites from the Air*, talk by Mike Farley.

Thursday 14th November 2019, 8pm: *Beacons of the Past – Hill Forts in the Chilterns Landscape*, talk by Ed Peveler (jointly with MAS).

News from the Heritage Centre

EXHIBITION: "Maidenhead's Inspirational Women" 4th July to 23rd August 2019

Inspirational women from a century of Maidenhead life are under the spotlight at this exhibition. Nick Forder, curator at the town's museum, has put together a fascinating exhibition which includes suffragette Victoria Simmons, Nancy Astor (the first woman to take her seat in parliament), Joan Hughes (one of the first women to join Air Transport Auxiliary), Agnes del Riego (the first woman scoutmaster), Baroness Shreela Flather (the first female Asian mayor), Theresa May (the UK's second female Prime Minister) and other prominent women who can be inspiring role models for the young women of today.



EXHIBITION: "ATA-girls & Ancient Airmen" 29th August – 2nd November 2019



New displays to complement our *Grandma Flew Spitfires* exhibition and mark the 80th Anniversary of the formation of ATA. Objects on display for the first time will include the uniforms of two ATA ladies.

EXHIBITION: "Maidenhead at War (Remembrance re Maidenhead & WW2)" 5th November – 7th December 2019



EXHIBITION: "Maidenhead in Art" 1st December 2019 – 2nd February 2020

Paintings, prints and photographs from the Heritage Centre and other collections, local artists and local photographers.

As always, full news and information about the Heritage Centre is available on our website www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 14th September 2019Jazz by the Riverside with the Fabulous Shirtlifters
Reminder of details insideWednesday 16th October 2019Afternoon with discussion on Waste Management in
Maidenhead.
3.00 pm at Parish Centre, Cookham Holy Trinity ChurchWednesday 20th November 2019Civic Society AGM, preceded by a talk by Charles
Campion. Bromley Room, Methodist Church, High Street.
7.45 for 8.00pm.

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CIVIC SOCIETY – KEY CONTACTS

		<u></u>
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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2019

At St Luke's Community Hall, Norfolk Road, Maidenhead

8th January, 12th February, 12th March, 9th April, 14th May, 11th June, 9th July, 10th September, 8th October, 12th November, 10th December

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 20th November 2019 at 8.00 pm, in the Bromley Room, the Methodist Church, High Street, Maidenhead.

The closing date for copy for the next issue of the Newsletter is 11th October 2019

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