

# **BLETCHINGLEY PARISH COUNCIL**



## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**2008-2009**



# BLETCHINGLEY PARISH COUNCIL

## ANNUAL REPORT 2008 – 2009

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### Chairman's Report

The Bletchingley Parish Council continues its unrelenting schedule of tasks with seemingly ever increasing issues; large and small.

One of the major issues this year was the Tarmac Planning Application with the approval of WBB/Sibelco for a dry mortar silo plant to be constructed within the North Park Quarry, which the Bletchingley Parish Council was totally opposed to.

When the application went to Planning at County Hall and the planning was approved on the back of a miscount, all appeared lost but all the parties kept on fighting and the eventual re-vote was against the proposal. Our thanks go to Godstone Parish Council, Godstone Village Association and, by no means least, QOG, all of whom demonstrated a steely determination.

I must also thank the newly named Sibelco and their British Board of Directors for their acknowledgement of their past errors and their eventual decision to say NO to Tarmac.

Our excellent rapport with Sibelco management will minimise any future problem. However, we will remain vigilant because, without doubt, something in the future will raise its ugly head and we will be forced to fight again.

The CCTV systems that we have wisely invested in, in the past, continue to offer that little extra protection, perceived or otherwise. On the back of our existing systems, I am pleased to announce that we have been successful in convincing Surrey Police to add an additional camera which has recently been positioned opposite The Curry House, the installation of which is a clear demonstration of our District Inspector, Elaine Burtenshaw's support of Bletchingley policing.

The legal case that we have been fighting for the past five years was due to a local Parishioner who illegally drove a motor vehicle repeatedly along Footpath 506. The

case has now been concluded in Bletchingley Parish Council's favour with costs awarded totalling just under £25,000.

Initially the on-going Court Case was a drain on our finances, forcing us to suspend two of our largest contracts and additional belt tightening. The Parish Council stood firm throughout the many Court appearances and Appeals. This support was essential for a positive outcome and a great support to the Chair. Thank you very much to my fellow Councillors.

Our Executive Officer, Kim Wantling, has embarked on an exciting new project called Bletchingley Playground Friends, which proposes to install a new playground in Grange Meadow. Draft plans and an overview have been put before the Bletchingley Parish Council and I am delighted to say that the Council has agreed to a donation of £10,000 on the basis that the specific equipment would be purchased direct by the Parish Council once details are formalised.

Regretfully, I have to report the recent resignation of Beryl Tatnell as Parish Councillor. Beryl has been a Councillor for a number of years and had direct responsibility for Bletchingley Cemetery. She acted as Vice Chairman for the Parish Council and was a member of the Village Hall Management Committee. Our thanks go to Beryl for her valued contribution to the Parish Council.

Our Council has two new additions as of this month, taking us to a full complement of the Council. May I take this opportunity to welcome again Sally Ann Ray and Pat Glenn.

Finally I must pass on my thanks and gratitude to the rest of the Council for their commitment and dedication to their duties and, of course, I must not forget our Executive Officer for her unquestioning commitment to her post.

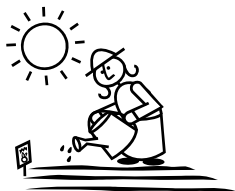
**Councillor Robin Gater**

Chairman

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### Allotments



The Council is currently responsible for 23 Allotments, which are let out to Residents at an Annual Rent of £17.50 per annum general rate and

£15.00 concessionary rate for senior citizens and those in receipt of social benefits.

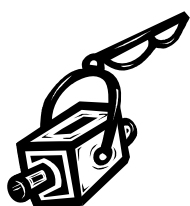
The plots are generally well maintained and there is now a Waiting List of 7. For this reason the Council has resolved to open up 10 Allotments on the old Allotment Field, next to Stychens Lane, and is currently in the process of obtaining quotes from contractors to rotivate the area and fence it off. The plots will then be marked out and offered to Residents for cultivation at the same rates as those in Little Common Lane.

The Council again ran the Competition for the Best Kept Allotment, and eight allotment holders entered, all of which were of a high standard. The Competition was again judged by show judge Mr. John Bishop, and the cup was won by Mr. Derek Coppard. The Council will again be running this Competition and letters will be sent out shortly inviting plot holders to enter.

We also hope to be included again in the Bletchingley in Bloom entry this year.

**Councillor Jeanne Moore**

### CCTV



The Bletchingley Parish Council operates two fixed cameras with digital recording and one mobile camera with integral digital recording. The mobile camera currently moves between four fixed locations around the High Street. As necessary this camera is moved on a timetable or on an incident basis.

As from the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2009 a new CCTV contractor will take over the maintenance of our cameras. The new company is called Vistec Systems. The company will carry out our camera checks and movements as required. The only difference that our Parishioners will notice is that when the mobile camera is moved, this will now be carried out with the use of a cherry picker.

The new maintenance contract will be reviewed after three months to assess the operation of the new contractor and to allow us to amend our requirements within the contract as necessary.

As outlined in The Chairman's Report, we have an additional CCTV camera positioned opposite The Curry House which is a Surrey Police CCTV system controlled, monitored and financed by Surrey Police.

The Parish Council is currently considering one additional site for our mobile CCTV. The site will be announced when agreed.

**Councillor Robin Gater**

### Cemetery



There was a deficit in the cemetery accounts this year of nearly £2,000. This was due to two things – income from burials, etc., was down on last year by £500, and more clearance work has been undertaken at an extra cost of £1512, representing six extra visits by the gardener.

The extra clearance was to deal with undergrowth, which has gradually built up and the encroaching bushes around the edge of the cemetery.

However, having consulted neighbouring parishes as to their charges, it is clear that we can afford to increase our own fees and a new table of fees has been introduced as from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.

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The Clerk has suggested that a section of the cemetery be set aside for the burial of ashes and a rose garden for the scattering of ashes, and this will be discussed further at a later date.

**Councillor Beryl Tatnell**

### Finance



In presenting the Bletchingley Parish Council Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2009 we are indebted to the Clerk for her continued dedication to maintaining accurate accounts. After considerable thought, the precept was increased by £2,500. Due to poor interest rates, the interest on deposit account received was reduced by £165, at the same time as there being a decrease in cemetery income.

The Council once again assisted the Village Fair by providing a Hog Roast which was well received and provided an income of £340 before deducting costs.

The court case with our resident over the use of the Right of Way of a Bletchingley footpath has been concluded and payment awarded. The full amount awarded was reimbursed to the insurers. During the year the Council contributed towards legal fees incurred in fighting the local mining application, the hog roast for the village fair and a contribution to Tandridge Community Fund and Citizens Advice Bureau. Costs were incurred in painting the High Street and for planning permission relating to the Village Sign, both of which have enhanced the village surroundings. Again the Council contributed to Bletchingley in Bloom for various projects to improve the ambience of the village, in spite of wilful damage done by vandals to plants and flowers over recent weeks. The Council has contributed to the Memorial Boards, which are now displayed in the Village Hall. The remaining expenses were due to usual costs incurred with the upkeep of

the cemetery, CCTV systems and various groundwork maintenance projects completed on a regular basis. The Parish Council are grateful to DA Landscaping for continued high standards of maintenance at the cemetery which has had a full year's clearance.

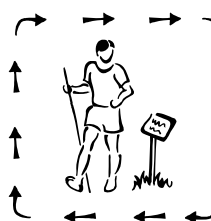
The Council have confirmed their support to Bletchingley Playground Friends with a donation to help provide suitable equipment for a new playground area on Grange Meadow for the youth of the village. This is an important project and all financial assistance will be most welcome in order that this facility will be up and running in the very near future.

The Clerk as well as carrying out her work for the Council has been acting as Secretary for the Sibelco Liaison Committee and studying for her CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration). As a consequence, her salary will be adjusted accordingly.

These accounts are final subject to audit by the internal and external auditors and will be open to the public to view in due course. The Clerk will post the dates for public viewing of the accounts on the Notice Board at the appropriate time.

**Councillor Ken Bridger**

### Footpaths



Apart from footpath 506 (the back path to the north of the High Street), which has been covered in the Chairman's Report, it has been a relatively quiet year.

A few obstructions and lost way marking signs have been reported to the Surrey County Council footpath's officer for our area, and have been attended to. The A25 Bletchingley to Godstone footpath alongside the road was re-done.

Clearance of footpaths is the responsibility of the landowners, unless the path has been 'adopted' by the County Council; in this

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context we have requested clearance by SCC of mud from the section of footpath on the bank down Stychens Lane as far as the entrance to Dormers Farm, as it in effect constitutes the footpath beside the road in this section, but as it is unadopted this may not be done.

Uncertainty over the ownership of the back path has led the Council to adopt that footpath and we are currently reviewing the condition of the surface to make repairs where necessary.

**Councillor Robert Trotman**

### Mineral Issues



Last year just after our Annual Meeting the County Planning Authority (CPA) finally refused permission for Tarmac to develop a plant within North Park Farm Quarry. After long negotiations between our Chairman and WBBMinerals, good relations were re-established, and WBBM agreed to withdraw their agreement with Tarmac to prevent that company lodging an appeal against the County decision.

**WBBM retrospective application** to ratify the 'as built' processing plant in North Park Farm Quarry appeared last August. We commented on the decreased visual amenity because the buildings are higher than originally approved, on the need properly to control dust and noise, and the potential hazard to our water supply, as the plant is set very close to the aquifer beneath that supplies our water. The decision by SCC to permit the plan in September 2008 contained no requirement by the CPA to change the existing layout or add any of the omitted features. However, conditions were imposed on dust control and traffic routing. Quarry traffic is not permitted to use North Park Lane unless sand has to go west to Redhill. Although it was stated that the quarry should

cease operations in 2014, it is felt that this is unlikely to happen.

### **WBBMinerals has now become SibelcoUK.**

Towards the end of last year a new Sibelco Community Liaison Group was formed to meet 3 or 4 times a year under the chairmanship of our County Councillor, Marian Myland with representatives from SCC, TDC, Godstone and our Parish Councils, the Godstone Village Association and QOG. A subcommittee to meet 6-weekly would deal quickly with any problems, particularly dust. The first liaison meeting on November 8<sup>th</sup> 2008 went well and was constructive as were the first few subcommittee meetings. However, the Terms of Reference document that should have been signed by all parties at this stage was delayed.

In January Sibelco submitted to the CPA a Scoping Request to extract sand from Pendell. This request is a preliminary stage before a formal planning application. In February we received a copy of the CPA response. This stated that this new scoping request should be resubmitted when it has been enlarged to cover issues not only dealing with the new extension of the quarry, but also with the existing quarry area which is still being worked, and also the processing plant which would be part of any new development. This is still awaited. In the meantime on February 25<sup>th</sup>, Sibelco staged a public exhibition in our Village Hall to explain their prospective development at Pendell.

The meeting was very well attended and initially deemed a success by all. However, in the event, it provoked a hornet's nest. The Quarry Observation Group (QOG) had circulated a leaflet outlining a number of issues of potential concern that residents might like answered by Sibelco with the CPA map showing potential Mineral Zones. Sibelco staff at the exhibition were questioned along some of the suggested lines. Subsequently QOG were accused by Sibelco of orchestrating public feeling against them. This led to a walkout by Sibelco at the next

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Liaison Meeting in March. After reassurance of cooperation by all concerned, Sibelco have agreed to resume the Liaison meetings. The result of this of course has been delay in raising and discussing the issues of concern. Sibelco now have sent us a copy of their Dust Control Plan, required by the CPA. This was discussed at the dust subcommittee May meeting. The next full Liaison meeting will be on June 16<sup>th</sup>, when we hope that the Terms of Reference will at last be signed. Meanwhile we are waiting not only for the revised Scoping Request, but also for the main Application to quarry at Pendell and the Environmental Statement that will accompany it.

**Star Energy:** The Star Energy gas appraisal scheme at King's Farm, Tilburstow Hill, took an unexpected turn when they struck oil rather than gas. Consequently all the plant for gas extraction has been removed from the site and a retrospective application has recently been made to ratify the development already installed to appraise the oil reserves. The original site boundaries have also been slightly altered; the works compound, although still in South Godstone, lies directly against the boundary with our Parish. The original 3-year time limit imposed for the gas appraisal has been maintained and, as it stands, the results of the oil work must be completed by May 2010. If there is insufficient oil for economic working, the site must then be restored to agriculture, meaning that all buildings, machinery and roadways must be removed. If the oil is workable a new planning application will be submitted.

**SEERA Plan:** In December, SEERA redefined their requirements for the production of building sand in the south east of the country. As they had earlier acknowledged the current slump in the building industry, we were anticipating reduced demands for sand. Surrey is now expected to produce 1.32 million tonnes of sand between 2010 and 2026. Although this volume is less than the current amount, SCC

feels it is unsustainable, as a number of local quarries are almost worked out, too much production is expected of this area and SEERA does not sufficiently take into account the reduced need for building materials. An Examination in Public for the government will be considering Surrey's submission in the late summer. The threat to us would be the development of the quarry zones on Nutfield Marsh. But we must wait and see.

**SCC Minerals Local Plan:** Following the Minerals Framework discussions of last year, SCC would normally have been updating the Minerals Plan by July 2009, but because of the elections in June this will now be delayed until October. The plan will then be up for consultation at least until the end of the year before final submission, which the Government require by February next year. The Surrey Minerals Plan will reflect the Government's final decision on the apportionment of sand and gravel extraction in the SE and also identify which sites would be exploited.

**Councillor Ann Butler**

### Neighbourhood Watch/Police Liaison



This has been a very difficult year. One of the main reasons being that the village unfortunately lost the services of PSCO Dawn Sheppard early in the year. During her period of active service in the village she was extremely competent in her duties, meeting and talking to residents and where her brief allowed, she gave advice and where appropriate, took suitable action. She has been sorely missed and the residents have felt less assured by her absence. However, PC Nick Shrapel has continued to serve both Bletchingley and South Nutfield as best as possible.

The Parish Council is most grateful to both Area and Street Co-ordinators for their

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continued efforts especially these past few months with everyone the length and breadth of the country having to tighten their belts due to the “credit crunch”, which has exacerbated the increase in burglaries, vehicle thefts and would-be robbers at our local Post Office, together with elderly people being tricked of their hard earned savings. It is with regret that we shall be without an Area Co-ordinator as Mr Nigel Price has indicated he wishes to retire from his post. Mr Price has given unstinting service to the village in so many ways and it is appropriate that we express our thanks to him on behalf of the residents of the village residents.

The bi-monthly Police Panel meetings have continued throughout the year, although attendance has not been altogether satisfactory. Residents who attended have been given useful information by the Police who in turn have had feed back from those attending. These meetings are organised so that residents can air their views on problems that affect the village. Some of those we have endured are: vandalism of fences, vehicles and windows; graffiti; damage to post-box; telephone kiosk; bus shelters and noise during the past twelve months. Your help is needed to make this village a safe and pleasant place.

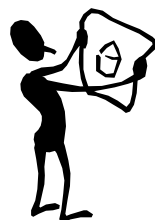
The Parish Council is updated each month on reported crimes and PC Nick Shrapel has also provided the Countryside Alert Newsletters to the Area Co-ordinators. These can also usually be found on the website and on the Parish Notice board. Unfortunately, this particular service has been discontinued but PC Nick Shrapel will continue to update on Bletchingley crime to the Parish Council and Area Co-ordinators. In place of the Countryside Alert Newsletter, Country Watch text and e-mail alert system has been set up funded by Tandridge Community Safety Partnership, which warns people in rural communities about suspicious events, people or vehicles. This is a free service and information can be obtained through the Tandridge News.

We are most grateful to PC Nick Shrapel for stopping the traffic for Remembrance Sunday Service parade and the two-minute silence and also for his efforts and support during his normal duties in the village.

In conclusion, we are seeking a volunteer for the central section to act as an Area Co-ordinator. We are looking forward to seeing our newly appointed PCSO in the village, hopefully by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of May. Lastly, the high tech CCTV police camera has now been installed in the location of the Coneybury Shops. We are indebted to Inspector Elaine Burtenshaw for bringing about this important project. Once again residents are asked to be vigilant and to report any suspicious activity to the police.

**Councillor Ken Bridger**

### Planning



The parish Council has statutory rights to be consulted by the District Council on all planning issues determined by the District Council within the Parish. As a matter of courtesy, we are usually consulted on planning issues which are the responsibility of Surrey County Council and by other authorities on our boundary.

Planning issues are normally the longest item on the Parish Council agenda and the one for which most people, other than Parish Councillors attend. The Chairman has always allowed residents to speak for or against any planning issue. Some lively debates have ensued. Because our response has to be with the District Council within 3 weeks of the plans being submitted to the District Council, the Parish Council considers plans not only at its full meeting, usually on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month, but also at a special planning committee meeting on the last Monday of the month.

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The number of planning applications has declined during the past month due no doubt to the economic situation nationally. However, since each planning application comes with background information and sets of plans and a site plan it does take time to give full consideration. A site visit is also made where the site is not well known or where the application seems likely to be contentious.

Whilst the Parish Council's views on any plan can be over-riden by the District Council, we do have an important role in contentious cases since a written objection by the Parish Council means that the plan has to be considered by the full planning committee of the District Council and not agreed by the planning officers in committee i.e. not in public.

The Parish Council are grateful to Howard Cudey the Estate Agents who allow plans to be accessible for public viewing in their agency. This is a very useful service, which saves parishioners a trip to the Oxted offices to see the plans. Details of plans are also accessible on the internet, although viewing A3 plans on a laptop screen is not easy. Our thanks therefore to the staff of Howard Cudey and my thanks to the Parish Councillors who faithfully attend the second meeting in the month.

**Councillor David Martin**

### Recreation



Under the regulations for Risk Assessment, which all Parish Councils have to undertake, Stychens Playground area and all equipment is inspected by me, on a monthly basis, as Councillor responsible for this area, and this report is submitted to the Council. It is looking very good at the moment, and appears to be well utilised.

Some clearance work was undertaken, and repair of the boundary fence at the bottom of Five Acre playing field was carried out. The playground area has not required any expenditure this year apart from hedge cutting.

The formation of a new playground area at Grange Meadow is a new project being undertaken by Bletchingley Playground Friends, who are in the process of raising funds. The Council has agreed that a fund £10,000 would be made available on the basis that specific equipment would be purchased direct by the Parish Council once details were formalised by Playground Friends. The Clerk will give an update on this scheme at the Annual Parish Meeting.

The only expenditure incurred in relation to Stychens Lane Playground this year was £85 for the hedge cutting.

**Councillor Jeanne Moore**

### Sports Association



The Sports Association comprises all the sports clubs that use Grange Meadow, plus a District Councillor and the three trustees appointed to oversee the use of the meadow, and includes a representative from BAGaged, who look after the skateboard park.

Grange Meadow is held under a trust by Tandridge District Council and is for recreational purposes, including organised sports. At present these are the Bletchingley Football Club, the Bletchingley Bowls Club, the RBL Rifle Club and the Ex-Couldson Model Racing Car Club. Sadly, the Bletchingley Cricket Club ceased to function a few year ago defeated by the costs of keeping a satisfactory pitch going with a dwindling membership. However, the trustees are keen to revive cricket in the village and, having had the square resurfaced, are

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pursuing the proper maintenance required to bring the pitch up to playing standard once again with advice from Surrey County Cricket Club and Tandridge District Council. If all goes well, it should be possible to play a match or two here later in the season.

The Sports Association supervises the use of the buildings on Grange Meadow, which are placed in the care of the clubs. These are the main pavilion (shared by the Football and Cricket clubs), the Bowls clubhouse, the Model Car Racing hut joined to the Rifle Range and the small green hut on the west side of the meadow which was the original cricket hut and is now a store used for equipment and a local hurdle-making activity. It does not supervise the skateboard park, which is the direct concern of TDC, but is of course interested in its activity because of the shared access road and close proximity.

The Sports Association has supported the projected children's playground close to the skateboard park and has agreed to hand back to TDC the necessary space, provided compensatory car parking is provided near the main buildings. The coming of the playground will involve CCTV which will benefit the clubs as well.

Vandalism continues to be a major problem, particularly for the Bowls Clubhouse, which is in the most vulnerable position. Most of the damage caused seems simply wanton destruction for the hell of it, but recently equipment has been stolen. So far the police seem unable to detect the culprits but with enhanced CCTV this may change. The cost to the clubs, particularly the Bowls Club, is significant and makes an already stretched financial position even more precarious. Local people do not seem inclined to join the clubs as active members, sadly, but if more could see their way to supporting the clubs through non-playing membership it would make quite a difference.

The main pavilion, built in 2001, includes a bar and good-sized clubroom which are now leased to a local manager who runs a

successful social activity in support of the football club. It is good to see this social facility being used most evenings of the week and often for local family events. The manager is keen to have more daytime events (tel; 742802).

The Sports Association office holders are as follows: Chairman Robert Trotman, secretary and treasurer, Christine Bolshaw. The 3 trustees are Peter Friend, John Trott and Robert Trotman.

**Councillor Robert Trotman**

### Transport and Community Speedwatch



The year from 2008 to 2009 has proved very interesting with regards transportation. The government has encouraged “sustainability”, “green travel”, and “economise” where possible. The later months as “recession” has taken hold have proven the wisdom of economy and rightly so.

There have been interesting developments between government decisions and the monopolies commission regarding the amount of Airports that BAA can actually own which I am sure most people are aware of, as it has been widely commented on in the media. As a council we (although not joining the Gatwick boundary) monitor the decisions and any expansion plans closely. Likewise with the development plans of Redhill aerodrome – one moment a housing estate is planned the next just a development for keeping animals, the latter suspected of leading to future housing development via a different route in planning regulations. Either way, as a council we monitor these planning applications very closely and speak with action groups and local authorities as appropriate.

The latter part of 2008 saw the introduction of some new buses along the A25 to Redhill. These are a lot better in allowing disabled access to public transportation, however it is

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still impossible to get a bus home to Bletchingley post 8pm and the cost of a taxi is rapidly becoming prohibitive to some of our residents. I would like to remind residents that “Buses 4U” operates in the area and car sharing with a neighbour should be encouraged when shopping on a Saturday morning.

It has been noticeable that the traffic along the A25 has reduced over the last few months as people restrict the use of their personal vehicles (myself included). Driving when absolutely required helps on many fronts, reducing carbon and saving the environment, reducing running costs of vehicles and reducing maintenance costs. As does driving sensibly a little less right foot on the accelerator and correct gear selection although I am sure I do not need tell you this.

This brings me nicely onto community speed watch. We have a very active team within Bletchingley who have approached the task with an amazing attitude to politeness and enthusiasm. Very commendable and my thanks are extended to every member of the team. The speed detector has recently been away for a week for recalibration but is checked at every switch on to prove sensitivity and accuracy. I must remind drivers that the hand held speed detector works in both directions – towards and away from the direction being pointed.

The speed watch teams are out and about more often as we approach the summer months. The teams are very approachable and will endeavour to answer questions that you may have. The aim of the speed watch teams is to encourage responsible driving through our historic village. Registrations are only recorded when a speed is reached above our target speed (set above the speed limit). We are reasonable people after all!

**Councillor Neil Munday**

### Website



This year has seen a profit in the website accounts. Running costs, as forecast for the maintenance of the website are low and comprise renewals of hosting and domain names etc. All income is from advertising in the Business section, which remains fairly constant.

In the last year we have had 6848 visits to the site. This is up by 3.63% from last year's figures. Visits are being received from all over the world. 24.65% are returning visitors, and 75.35% are new visitors. 80% of all visits are via search engines with 10% each for direct searches and referring sites. The village directory has received 1208 pageviews. Neighbourhood Watch 522 pageviews.

If you want to advertise an event or news on the website, please forward the details to the Clerk by e-mail or telephone.

**Clerk Kim Wantling**

Bletchingley Parish Council  
20 Lambert Cottages  
Rabies Heath Road  
Bletchingley  
Surrey  
RH1 4PN  
Tel: 01883 742 998  
Email: [info@bletchingley.org.uk](mailto:info@bletchingley.org.uk)  
Website: [www.bletchingley.org.uk](http://www.bletchingley.org.uk)

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Don't forget to come to the

**Annual Village Meeting**

**Wednesday 20 May 2009  
Community Centre from 7.30pm**

This year we take on a new format

**Speakers:**

**Pari Dhillon**

Surrey Community Action

*“Parish Plans and how the community can be  
involved in the process”*

**Kim Wantling**

Bletchingley Playground Friends

*“Update on the Bletchingley Playground  
project”*