

BLETCHINGLEY PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

JANUARY 2014 to MARCH 2014

Allotments – Renewal letters went out at the beginning of March. Fees for the plots continue to remain unchanged at £30 per year from 1 April to 31 March each year. Following a spate of vandalism at the Little Common Lane site, the Parish Council have invested in new security gates which were installed at the end of February. We still have a number of allotments vacant on both sites and would encourage anyone wishing to grow their own vegetables but not having enough space at home to contact the Parish Clerk for more information.

CCTV – There are still a few tweaks to make with the CCTV cameras, but the system is working well with plenty of storage capacity and scope for increasing the cameras should residents wish to additional areas to be covered.

Cemetery – A further area of the side of the cemetery has been cleared. An initial draft map of the existing headstones has now been drawn up but needs to be double checked against what is on the ground. We are pleased to confirm that we can now accommodate ashes in the cemetery as well as burials. The ashes plot area has now been designated and the first two plots already allocated. The rules and costs are on the Website, please contact the clerk if you are interested.

Hevers' Pond – The path running along one side of the pond has been flooded for some time now due to the constant wet weather but it is good to see the pond full.

Bletchingley Community Defibrillator – We are pleased to advise that the Defibrillator has now been installed. A training date is awaited. This will be held at St Catherine's school. Anyone interested in attending, should get in touch with the Parish Clerk. There are likely to be 3 or 4 spaces that can be utilised.

Footpaths – The Volunteer Footpath Wardens/walkers are soon to receive copies of their designated paths. Once these are agreed, it is hoped to periodically arrange a footpath work party to deal with reported small vegetation issues. Anyone else interested in coming on board, please do contact the Parish Clerk.

Precept – The Parish Council have not changed the precept level and this remains at £38,500 for the 2014/15 financial year.

Tilgate Common – The scrub clearance has now been completed at Tilgate Common resulting in a much more open area that can be accessed. A tree survey report has been requested and from that report any advised tree work will be undertaken. We would like to remind residents who back onto Tilgate Common not to “dump” any waste, including vegetation waste on the Common as this will be treated as “illegal dumping”. Local residents have very kindly volunteered to do a litter pick of the area to clear up any litter that is now visible as a result of the cleared undergrowth.

Air transport - In January of this year the Council responded to two consultation documents in so far as they related to flights from and to Gatwick; the Joint Airspace Consultation, undertaken jointly by NATS and Gatwick Airport and the Night Flying Restrictions Stage 2 Consultation undertaken by the Department for Transport. At the time of writing (6 March) it is not known when the results of these consultations will be published.

Sibelco Quarries: When the Dust Subcommittee meets on March 17th, the dust gauge data will be reviewed and the quarry developments at North Park Farm and Pendell during 2014 will be reported. The full Community Liaison Committee will meet on April 23rd, when there will be a site visit to see work starting at Pendell.

Mercers Farm - A planning application has been submitted to the County Planning Authority to extract sand from Mercers Farm on Nutfield Marsh, a source of building sand identified in the Surrey Minerals Plan. Sand would be extracted from deep beds beneath the water table, the aquifer which supplies our water. Dewatering of the site would be necessary. A new access to the site would be constructed on the A25 in Nutfield, just across the M23 bridge between Halfway House and South Lodge. The plan states that the new quarry would generate 150 lorry movements a day of which 85% would travel east through Bletchingley and Godstone.

The Parish Council has objected mainly on the grounds of the adverse effects of increased traffic through the village, together with the reduced air quality from vehicle emissions and quarry-generated dust. A further objection has been to the potential risk of pollution of the water supply, a concern raised by the local water company. This application will go to Surrey County Council Planning Committee for decision.

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 and, likewise, we are 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 one which is most often of interest to parishioners. The chairman has always allowed residents to speak regarding any planning issue. This is usually done under “Residents’ Requests”. The Parish Council is obliged to respond to planning submissions within 3 weeks of the receipt of the application by the District Council and for this reason the Parish Council considers applications at the Full Council meeting (usually the second Monday of each month) and again at Planning Committee meetings (usually on the last Monday of each month). The agendas of each meeting are published on the Bletchingley Village website and posted on the village notice board prior to each meeting (3 clear working days before). Parishioners with an interest in a particular planning application should check when that application is due to be discussed if they wish to comment under the Residents’ Requests item on the agenda or if they wish to send a comment in by post or e/mail to the Parish Clerk.

It should be made clear that the Parish Council does not decide planning issues but rather comments to the District Council using its local knowledge. This can be important in contentious applications, as an objection by the P.C. would ensure careful consideration by the District Council and the application would generally be considered by the full planning committee of the District Council and not by the council officers alone.

In recent times there have been some significant changes in the planning system, most notably the introduction of “Permitted Development”. This takes some householder applications out of the normal planning system, although it is wise to consult with the planning authority to ensure that they are satisfied the proposals are compliant and that a “Certificate of Lawfulness” can be granted to avoid any future controversy about the works.

All planning applications relating to the parish are posted by TDC to Howard Cundey Estate Agent’s office in the village and can be viewed by any interested party (except when the papers are taken for review at Parish Council meetings). We are grateful to Howard Cundey and their staff for this service, which saves parishioners a trip to Oxted to see the applications. All planning applications can also be viewed on Tandridge District Council’s website.

Sally-anne Ray – Chairman