

Chairman's Report

It has been a busy year for the Parish Council, with a number of activities recently completed or about to be started. Perhaps our biggest achievement this year for those of you that were at our last Annual meeting and raised this as one of your biggest concerns, was the improvement to sight lines at the Pendell Road/Sandy Lane junction. This was detailed in last month's magazine.

In October, we welcomed Ian Borman as a co-opted Councillor, so we are once again up to our full strength of 9.

My thanks go not only to those mentioned in last year's report for their various activities in the community but also to the additional residents who have put themselves forward as volunteers to help the more vulnerable residents of the civil parish during the COVID-19 crisis period. They have certainly been kept busy providing daily shopping and prescription runs for those in self-isolation. It is really great to see how the village is pulling together during this challenging time.

Affordable Housing

The housing needs survey was carried out and the results have been analysed. However, further action is on hold in light of more urgent projects being carried out by the Parish Council.

Allotments & Fields and Stychens Lane Playground

The allotments have continued throughout the year to be almost fully occupied and we now have a waiting list.

Having obtained planning permission for the change of use of the A25 grazing field to provide a green cemetery, this is no longer available for letting.

Consideration of the upgrading of the Stychens Lane playground area is ongoing but at the time of writing, this area is closed.

Grange Meadow/Sports Association

Unfortunately, the skate ramp, a well-used facility, has been closed by TDC on safety grounds. We are hopeful that BagAged with support from the community will be able to raise the necessary funds to complete the repairs.

We were sad to hear the announcement of Bletchingley Players closing down this year after more than 60 years of productions. We understand that the Bletchingley Players hut is about to be re-let.

We are pleased to announce that we now have a Parish Office based at the Sports Pavilion and while the Pavilion is currently closed, we look forward to it reopening after the crisis is over and becoming a place for residents to meet our clerk and councillors should they need assistance.

Jeff Marks continues his much-valued role as manager and the Parish Council is particularly grateful to Jeff for the time, he has given so freely in helping to fit out the Parish Office.

CCTV

These continue to be active, monitoring the Parish Assets and at key locations around the village.

A new Green Cemetery

The Council has let the contract for the construction of the entrance from the A25 to a local contractor. The extension is necessary as we only have enough graves in the existing cemetery for the next year

or two. Unfortunately, the estimated cost cannot be funded wholly out of the precept. An application has been made for funding from CIL funds which is in the hands of TDC and a decision is expected in June. If this application is not successful, then the Council will apply to the Public Works Loans Board (see the Finance section for further brief details). We hope to complete the works by the end of Summer, COVID 19 permitting.

Footpaths and Green Spaces

This month we are also pleased to announce the opening of a new Permissive Pathway from Town Mead to Grange Meadow which provides an entirely safe route from Outwood Lane to the Grange Meadow facilities and to the Village School. . This has been a joint enterprise between the Council, our former clerk and former Cllr Robert Trotman. Our thanks to Bletchingley & Hathersham Estates for allowing BPC to create this new path. Please remember that it is a Permissive **Foot** Path so please do not abuse it as otherwise it will be taken from us.

The Waterhouse Lane/A25 junction area was seeded and a pleasing variety of wild (and not so wild) flowers were seen over the summer/autumn. This area will be strimmed annually to encourage a repeat performance.

Finance

The draft accounts will be published with the hard copy of the full report and published on the website in due course.

We have had several big costs this year including the legal and planning paperwork for the Pendell Crossing, the Parish office as well as the new Footpath detailed above.

Because of the new cemetery extension works which will cost over £50k, it may be necessary to borrow monies from the PWLB. If so, there will need to be a very modest increase in the precept to cover the interest payable. It has been calculated that this will amount to 89p for each household per year.

The work on repairing the High Street cobbles is delayed whilst we await news of suitable materials being available. A temporary “repair” has been executed outside the Post Office by SCC. This will have to be removed and re-laid once we have sufficient material.

We continue to support Bletchingley in Bloom. Repairs also need to be carried out to the area surrounding the War Memorial. Regular donations have been made to the good causes mentioned in last year’s report and in addition a donation was made to East Surrey Carers who operate from the Village Hall complex and provide regular support to some 60 residents of the village.

Environment and Minerals

Planting of trees was carried out at North Park Quarry in mid-March by volunteers from the Parish and Surrey Wildlife Trust with assistance from Sibelco. It is an ongoing concern of the Council that restoration, not only of vegetation but also of footpaths and bridleways is carried out soon as possible after operational work in an area has finished.

An application to extend the Pendell area currently being worked into Brewer Street has been submitted to SCC and the Council has submitted comment to both SCC and TDC.

An application has been submitted to increase the number of HGV movements at Mercers South quarry – again your Council has submitted its comments to both SCC and TDC.

As the A25 is currently comparatively free of vehicles the opportunity will be taken to establish base line readings for air quality at the Mercers entrance.

Village Hall & Community Centre

Both are currently closed. However, the Community Centre was refurbished during the Christmas vacation and is much improved as a result.

Neighbourhood Watch/Speed Watch

Bletchingley remains a Parish with a relatively low level of crime in Tandridge and in Surrey. This is in no small part due to the efforts of Di Turner and the Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) in Bletchingley. We were also very pleased to welcome back PCSO Lorraine Wells to our area.

Although we lost the argument with SCC Highways on the change of speed limits on Godstone Road, now that the traffic island has been constructed opposite Chevington Villas it is hoped that permission will be given for a Speedwatch session to be held there.

Planning

The Council continues to consider and comment on planning applications at both its full meetings and planning committee meetings. Residents can also submit comments either to the Council or directly to TDC and these comments are always considered by the Parish Council when deciding on their response.

Tree Management

The Parish Council continue to maintain the trees on Tilgate Common, the Cemetery, Stychens Field, the High Street and the allotments at Little Common Lane and Stychens sites. A survey will be carried out this year on trees that are on land in the Council's ownership and to include those on the new cemetery extension field.

Transport

Gatwick Airport published the final version of its Master Plan. There is an ongoing CAA review of SE Airspace and any plan to use the emergency runway for departures on a regular basis will very much depend on what transpires from the review. Hasn't it been blissfully quiet since the end of March!

Website

This continues to generate income to the Council's coffers and used as a way of communicating with Parishioners in conjunction with the monthly e-newsletters.

Council meetings during lockdown

These continue thanks to conference call facilities. The first such meeting was the planning meeting held on 29th March that went very smoothly. Full Council meeting on 14th April was subject to a slight technical hitch but did (eventually) take place. Residents can still raise requests for the meeting via email to the Clerk. Should residents wish to raise a request live and/or listen to the meeting, it is also possible by contacting the Clerk and we can provide call in details and register you for the meeting accordingly.

From Sally-anne Ray (Chair) and Pat Glenn (Vice-Chair) on behalf of Bletchingley Parish Council