



BLEDLow-CUM-SAUNDERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Parish Meeting held at Bledlow Ridge Village Hall
Thursday 7th April 2022 at 7pm

Present: Councillors: S Breese (Chair), S Reading (Vice Chair),
N Cox, J Butler, D Dobson,
Clerk: Tracey Martin
Buckinghamshire Councillors: Robert Carington

1. **Chair's Annual Report:** Cllr Breese read out his annual report (copied below)
2. **Question Time / Members of the Public Invited to speak:** No members of the public present

Meeting closed at 7.15pm

Signed.....

Date.....

Chairman's Reports:

After a break of four years, I once again find myself chairman of the parish council. Since 2017 much has changed and much has stayed the same. Changes have included the welcome appointment of a new clerk, now fully qualified, which means the council has greater freedom of operation. Meanwhile the list of issues confronting the council remains about the same length as before, some of which I will cover below:

Footpaths

Councillors Butler and Bird have formed a Working Group to check the definitive map. The 2026 deadline for registering unregistered rights of way has since been removed, but with the help of volunteers we have surveyed all the footpaths in the Parish and will register a number of rights of way which are not recorded accurately on the definitive map.

Earlier this year Cllr Butler negotiated a permissive footpath alongside Haw Lane with the landowner. Thus an important gap in the footpath network has been filled which will also improve road safety.

On a less positive front we still await the result of a review by Buckinghamshire Council into a disputed footpath near Lydebrook. We were promised the findings by Christmas, but though its availability is imminent we have yet to receive the report.

Bledlow Ridge Household Recycling Centre, Wigans Lane

There was a 'premature announcement' by Princes Risborough Town Council on social media last November of the reopening of this facility under the new name of 'Princes Risborough HRC'. It appears the re-opening is now included in the county's 2022/23 budget.

The Parish Council has to balance the wishes of those who would benefit from the HRC with those who will be negatively impacted because they live close by or along the lanes which form the site's only approach routes.

As the Parish Council had not been consulted, I wrote to the Leader of Buckinghamshire Council requesting assurances that:

1. That the 5,500 Tonnes p.a. limit will be enforced.
2. That the HRC will not be reopened until the issues identified both by Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Parish Council, Buckinghamshire Council's own officers and the Inspector have been addressed.
3. That a system of governance is put in place such that those directly affected by the HRC have a substantial influence over the way it is operated

A welcome development is we have recently received a request from our ward's three County Councillors, who have a manifesto commitment to the re-opening of the HRC, 'looking to work closely' with the Parish Council in this respect. We are thus hopeful that traffic and other environmental issues will have been addressed before the HRC re-opens.

Princes Risborough Relief Road

The planning of the expansion of Princes Risborough continues. It currently seems likely that the 'Culverton Link' relief road which will skirt the south of the town will not be built until expansion is all but complete. Unless carefully managed this could result in increased traffic along Shootacre Lane. The Parish Council, led in this instance by Cllr Bird, are closely monitoring the situation in the hope that a satisfactory solution can be found.

Planning

The Neighbourhood Plan has been in place for almost five years. Overall it has worked well, though a few developers have skirted the plan's policies to deliver sometimes unwelcome results. It is unlikely that we will need to formally update the plan in the near future as any further constraints some might like to see are unlikely to be accepted under the current planning regime.

The Molins site on Haw Lane has been vacant for some years. An application for nine houses made in December 2021 has since been withdrawn. We understand, but cannot confirm, that the site is now owned by a US investor who is considering a commercial development. Given the size and history of the site we will watch the situation closely.

Broadband

The majority of the Parish now has 'superfast' broadband of varying speeds, though a few 'not spots' remain principally those living off parts of Wigans Lane who have to rely on 4G for a reasonable service. Of more concern is that the Church Parochial Council has, on advice, served notice on Rapid Rural to remove the transmitter on the roof of Holy Trinity, Bledlow. We hope some of those served by this will be transferred to Rapid Rural's other transmitter by High Point (recently built on the site of Warren Cottage). The Parish Council will seek to help those affected as we did before. The solutions may be different as technology has moved on with services such as Starlink available – but at a price.

Grants

During the year we made the following grants to local organisations:

- To Aylesbury Opera for a performance at Holy Trinity, Bledlow.
- To both village halls to help them maintain and improve their facilities.
- To the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway to help fund drainage improvements.
- To help fund Platinum Jubilee celebrations in Bledlow, and soon I hope for Bledlow Ridge and Saunderton.

Maintenance

I wish to thank Cllrs Reading, Sage and Cox for their work on the maintenance committee. The state of footpaths and much else is gradually improving and I hope they will soon establish a rota for cleaning our road signs.

Speeding

Speeding remains an issue, particularly through Bledlow Ridge and along the B4009 in Bledlow. This is difficult to stop without an unrealistic increase in police presence. There are, however, ways to help reduce speeding:

- People can help revive the parish's Community Speed Watch by volunteering to be trained and to operate local speed checks.
- The Parish Council will encourage Buckinghamshire Council to replace central white lines with lines along roadsides and a number of other practical measures. This will not stop speeding but does have a measurable impact on the speed of traffic.

Drainage

The frequency of floods seems to be increasing. Whether or not this is because of global warming, I wish to remind all landowners that they are responsible for maintaining their ditches and culverts to allow the free passage of water from both their own land and their neighbours'.

Funding Minor Projects

We have encountered a difficulty with funding smaller projects such as reinstating 'Piccadilly' (where Chapel Lane meets Sandpit Lane). Small highway works requiring modest expenditure quickly become unaffordable once the cost of compliance and project management are added. I have written to Buckinghamshire Council's cabinet member for highways, urging him to address this issue which effectively disenfranchises sparsely populated areas such as ours. I am given to believe that this may be addressed after the current outsourcing agreement ends in April 2023.

Finance

The financial year started with an opening balance of £150,668.05. During the year, including Community Infrastructure Levy, we received funds of £68,587.66 and are projected to have spent £75,550.38 thus leaving a year-end balance of £143,705.33

After many years of relying on cheques as our only means of payment, our clerk has finally found and successfully introduced a method of internet banking; we hope this will speed up payments to our suppliers and improve our financial management.

Local Government & Councillors

A welcome change since my last period as chairman is the introduction of Buckinghamshire Council as a unitary authority combining the functions of the old district and county councils. This brings with it ward Cllrs Adoh, Carington and Etholen. In March we co-opted Louise Booth as a much needed councillor for Saunderton to take over from Cllr Blackwell who retired last October.

Finally, I would like to thank all councillors for their work over the past year and our clerk for her promptness and efficiency.

Simon Breese
Chairman, Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Parish Council