



# BLEDLow-CUM-SAUNDERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Parish Meeting held at Bledlow Ridge Village Hall  
Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at 7pm

Present: Councillors: D Dobson (Vice Chair), S Reading, N Cox, S Bird,  
J Butler, P Davidson, and M Bridgman  
No members of the public in attendance  
Buckinghamshire Councillor: C Etholen

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Breese (Chair). Buckinghamshire Councillors: S Adoh and R Carington
2. **Approval of Minutes from 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023:** Following a proposal by Cllr Bird seconded by Cllr Butler the minutes were approved.
3. **Chair's Annual Report:** In the absence of Cllr Breese, Cllr Dobson delivered the Chairman's report which was prepared by Cllr Breese ahead of the meeting. A copy of the report can be found below.
4. **Question Time / Members of the Public Invited to speak:**
  - 4.1. Cllr Etholen provided an update on behalf of Buckinghamshire Council, a copy of which can be found below.
  - 4.2. Councillors discussed the Household Recycling Centre and it was noted that Buckinghamshire Council ought to carry out a review of the business case for the Recycling Centre based on the established current usage after one year's option.

Meeting closed at 7.25pm

Signed.....

Date.....

---

## Chairman's Report

This is my ninth Chairman's report, I truly hope to pass the role on before too long as two five-year terms is sufficient – certainly for me, quite possibly also for the Parish.

The past year has been quiet when compared with previous years when we were dealing with such matters as developing the Neighbourhood Plan, setting up and running the Covid Support Group and working with Buckinghamshire Council to ameliorate the less welcome aspects of the reopening of the Household Recycling Centre on Wigans Lane.

### Data Centre at the former Molins site on Haw Lane

Most of us will remember the high levels of traffic generated by the initial phases of building the new data centre at the Molins site on Haw Lane as the site was excavated. During the past year the developers have been digging a trench along local roads for the power supply and data connections from Haw Lane to an electricity sub-station in Amersham. This has resulted in a proliferation of roadworks including, at its height, three sets of temporary traffic lights along the A4010.

The council has received overtures regarding ways in which the data centre might help the community, but progressing these has been frustrated by a much-delayed change of ownership of the site. We understand via Cllr Davidson that the transfer of ownership has now been completed, so we look forward to progressing matters with the new owner.

### Bledlow Ridge Household Recycling Centre

The HRC has completed its first full year of operation. Both the number of visitors and the volumes of waste are well down from those before the site's closure in 2019. This will be welcome to close neighbours and those living along the site's approach routes. HGVs removing waste from the site are constrained to a very few routes by weight and height limits on many of the surrounding roads. The operator is aware of periods to avoid for HGV movements such as the morning and afternoon school runs, but the timing and frequency of removals is driven by the amount of rubbish which has been dumped at any one time. HGV drivers are under strict instructions to keep well within speed limits, and the operator has promised to take action with any drivers not doing so.

The charges applied to people living outside Buckinghamshire appear to be responsible for the reduced volumes. Oxfordshire declined to contribute towards the running costs of the site which is little more than a mile from the county boundary. Assuming this decision remains unchanged following next year's local government elections, this will offer local residents continued respite. We have received occasional reports that the site's operators are not asking for proof of residence; the Parish Council will continue to monitor the situation and is interested in receiving any reports of lack of address checks and speeding HGVs so we can raise our concerns.

Visits collated from traffic data via installed traffic loop under the entrance of the site recording all vehicles entering the site.													
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
2017/18	9,833	8,892	9,900	9,719	10,274	9,013	8,951	6,364	6,421	5,743	6,030	6,148	97,288
2018/19	9,642	10,972	10,660	9,489	10,347	8,772	8,408	6,833	6,913	6,778	5,681	9,482	103,977
2019/20													
2020/21													
2021/22										871	2,017	1,962	
2022/23	3,040	3,439	3,422	4,044	3,723	3,523							21,191
Tonnes of waste brought to Bledlow HRC													
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
2017/18	609	494	533	485	614	452	437	337	242	365	274	333	5,176
2018/19	526	651	616	487	505	504	508	372	266	377	311	586	5,708
2019/20													
2020/21													
2021/22										10	68	78	
2022/23	105	155	125	119	108	122							733

Source: Buckinghamshire Council N.B. planning permission limits the site to 5,500 tonnes p.a. The latest data received by the Parish Council was 36,581 visitors and tonnage of 1,522.

### Traffic

In common with many rural areas there is a general problem with speeding along minor roads such as Sandpit Lane, Bledlow where residents have complained about courier vans and others driving at speed. These roads are subject only to the national speed limit and there is little which can be done: the police have insufficient resources to monitor minor roads, and as can be seen along Bledlow Ridge, drivers often ignore speed limits, so signage has limited if any affect. We are, however, still looking for a volunteer to lead the Community Speedwatch, a post which has remained unfilled for several years. Anyone interested should contact the clerk.

Following last year's speed surveys of the B4009 and Bledlow Ridge, the council has received and decided to support a proposal from Buckinghamshire traffic engineers for traffic calming along Bledlow Ridge. This will include amongst other measures the extension of the 30 mph. limit. We also hope that the current speed activated signs will be exchanged for ones displaying vehicle speeds as they pass in the hope that this will have a greater effect. Cllr Reading, who is leading on this issue, is currently applying for funding.

### Footpaths

The matter of footpath 81 near Lydebrook which connects with North Mill Road is due to go to a public enquiry, but we have yet to receive a date for this. The clerk continues to monitor the situation and we hope a date will soon be set.

### Parish Maintenance

The working group continues to manage the devolved services agreement under which the Parish determines the frequency of cutting some verges and footpaths. During the past year Cllrs Reading and Cox have also dealt with matters at The Dell and Studmore Pond in Bledlow Ridge, maintenance of Meadow Styles Playground and the scheduled re-seeding of worn parts of the grass on the green outside The Lions of Bledlow.

## Neighbourhood Plan Review

The Neighbourhood Plan came into force in June 2017. Together with Derek Stone and Cllrs Reading and Butler, I am reviewing the 470+ planning applications made since then. We are concentrating on applications for Change of Use, Major Developments, New Builds and Replacement Dwellings.

The working group's initial conclusion is that the plan is still fit for purpose. Though while a new plan is not needed, some policies have either become redundant or circumstances had changed e.g.

- Policy 3: Molins Site, Saunderton. the site is now being developed as a Data Centre
- Policy 13: Connecting the Parish, there has since been a substantial but not complete roll out of faster broadband.

The working group will present a report to the council later this year and we will also meet with the planning officers to review where the plan is working well and a few instances where it does not appear to have been followed.

## Planning

We continue to monitor the situation regarding the expansion of Princes Risborough. There has been little progress to report in the past year. We understand the developers are locked in protracted negotiations with Buckinghamshire Council over the funding of local infrastructure including the proposed Princes Risborough Relief Road which is particularly important for those living on Shootacre Lane.

## Grants and Donations

During the year the Parish Council made the following grants to local organisations:

Bledlow Village Hall	£15,000	Replacement of playground equipment
Bledlow Ridge Village Hall	£8,940	Car Park Repairs
Aylesbury Opera	£500	Support for performance in Bledlow
Bledlow Ridge Village Hall	£4,725	Roof repairs
Bledlow Ridge Tennis Club	£10,000	Grant for lighting
Bledlow Ridge Cricket Club	£50	Donation towards memorial plaque
Bledlow Ridge Tennis Club	£400	Donation towards tree works
Bledlow Ridge Cricket Club	£25	Donation towards tree carving

## Finance & Precept

The financial year started with an opening balance of £120,581.77. During the year, we are projected to receive funds of £60,471.70 and are projected to have spent £64,365.58 thus leaving a year-end balance of £116,687.89.

The Parish continues to have one of the lowest precepts in Buckinghamshire (the Parish's share of Council Tax). Our policy is to continue holding the rate for Band D houses steady after adjusting for inflation as the council has received adequate funds from the Community Infrastructure Levy from housing developments in the Parish. It is unlikely we will increase the precept until our reserves are further depleted which will not be for some years.

## Councillors

I wish to thank the clerk and the councillors for their work during the past year. As a council we also appoint Cllrs to represent the Parish Council to the following organisations.

Community Board: Cllr Breese

Bledlow Ridge Village Hall Committee: Cllr Butler

Bledlow Village Hall Committee: Cllr Bird

Bledlow Consolidated Charities: Cllr Reading

Footpaths working group: Cllrs Butler and Bird

Maintenance working group: Cllrs Reading and Cox

Neighbourhood Plan review working group, Cllrs Butler, Reading and Breese, Derek Stone.

## Councillor needed

During the past year Cllr Dawn Freeman resigned when she moved to Lacey Green, and we have welcomed Cllr Mike Bridgman in her place. However, we continue to have a further vacancy. This letter serves as a summary of the matters we deal with. If you are interested or know of someone who might be persuaded to join the council, please contact either me or the Parish Clerk.

**Simon Breese**

***Chairman, Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Parish Council***

## **Buckinghamshire Council Update –Bledlow cum Saunderton Parish Council AGM 8th April 2024**

Thank you for the opportunity to give a short update on some the past year's activities for Buckinghamshire Council.

As Councils within Buckinghamshire, we have a common purpose to improve the economic, environmental, health and social wellbeing of the county, its residents, businesses and visitors. We understand that as independent democratically elected bodies you work within your own financial constraints and represent communities at a truly local level and we recognise that parish and town councils are a key connection between the unitary council and their community who can help us improve services and foster greater community empowerment. We remain committed to working together with all local councils in Buckinghamshire.

It's important to firstly note some of the current challenges that our sector as a whole is facing. This year's budget was the toughest on record to set for us, with escalating costs and demand, particularly in four key areas – Children's and Adults Social Care, supporting children with additional needs to get to and from school, and providing accommodation for an increasing number of homeless people. We are pleased, with our record of prudent financial management, not to be in the position of a growing number of councils who are in serious financial trouble and we are pleased to have produced a balanced budget for the next 3 years, taking us to 2027. However, this isn't without making some really difficult choices and we are having to find significant savings during that period – it's an incredibly tough context in which to operate.

It's also been a very wet winter indeed, one of the wettest on record, and this is having a continued severely detrimental impact on our road network. We are all aware of the damage the weather has caused in terms of potholes and flooding and our teams have been working round the clock to address these issues. This is a situation impacting all parts of the country, with national media coverage of a recent Asphalt Industry Alliance report citing potholes being at an 8 year high, and that in total, councils are expecting to fix around two million potholes this year across England and Wales.

With ever decreasing resources we are doing everything we can to improve things here in Buckinghamshire, including having 29 gangs out responding to emergency call outs and repairing defects. After last winter's bad weather we repaired 30,000 potholes and we anticipate that number will be even higher this year. We welcome news that nationally, over £8 billion of funds saved from the cancelled section of HS2 is now being re-directed to road repairs, but we also know this is long term and we won't see the impact of this investment in the immediate future.

We all hope that better weather is on its way, to allow us to fully embark on our programme of longer-term maintenance and improvements. We have released an extra £5million from our reserves to spend on the roads which will allow us to add to our programme of 'plane and patch' – we are currently prioritising where these works will be, based on input from local councillors and technicians.

Finally, I would like to highlight our four key corporate priorities, strengthening our communities, protecting the vulnerable, improving our environment and increasing prosperity. Thank you.