



Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Parish Council

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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