

BLETCHINGLEY PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

JANUARY 2009 to APRIL 2009

DAFFODIL VANDALISM – Whilst the majority of us were enjoying the splash of spring colour throughout the village from the daffodils planted by Bletchingley in Bloom members and residents over the last 2 years, it appears that some one/persons have taken it upon themselves to wantonly destroy what others enjoy. On the night of Wednesday 25th March between 7.30pm and 9pm all daffodils between Barfields and Grange Meadow were hacked down. This act of wanton destruction is not acceptable and is being investigated by the police. There have been other known occurrences of this vandalism which have been reported to the police, including the latest on Friday 10th April in the early afternoon where 3 teenage youths were seen to attempt to hit the daffodils under the trees opposite nos 22 and 23 Lambert Cottages. It is unclear yet whether these youths were identified as they walked past the Coneybury Shops by the police CCTV camera. **DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR CHILDREN WERE AT THIS TIME?** Another incident witnessed shortly after this was of a young lady exiting from a silver car, whose registration details have been passed to the police, walking over to the daffodils and proceeding to pick a handful of them before returning to the vehicle and being driven off onto the A25 into Bletchingley. Do you know these people? Would you like it to be flowers on your property next that are vandalised or picked?

Allotments: The new season has started and all allotments are taken with a current waiting list of 7. Allotment holders are asked to ensure their plots are kept cultivated and boundaries maintained. If plots remain un-cultivated despite warning letters, then the tenancy will be revoked and the plot handed to the next person on the list. No structures, tools, equipment of any kind are to be placed leaning against the boundary hedges. We are currently in discussion with the Water Board about the use of the area that is used for excess composting. At present, they have asked us to stop using this “composting area” as it appears it was not originally included in the agreement for the allotments. Due to the increasing waiting list, which appears to be on the increase across the country as well, the Parish Council are currently looking into the provision of an additional 10 plots being made available in the Old Allotment Field at Stychens Lane. The remainder of the field will remain as a grazing field.

Annual Parish Meeting: This has been set for Wednesday 20th May in the Community Centre at 7.30pm and will follow a new format with invited speakers. Bletchingley Playground Friends will give an update on progress and have some plans available for viewing. There will be a speaker from Surrey Community Action to talk about Community Led Planning for Parish Councils/Village Appraisals. This is to gauge the support for this initiative, as the steering group needed for this, would need to consist of members of the community with only a representation from the Parish Council. The editor of the Parish Magazine has also been approached to give an update at the meeting. The usual reports given by the Parish Councillors on their areas of responsibility will be published in an Annual Report to be made available at the meeting and in advance on the website or at the Village Post Office shop.

Bletchingley in Bloom: The 2nd phase of the perennial amenity beds has been planted. Bletchingley’s “Funk” Brook was cleared of all debris and excess vegetation and can now be heard gently flowing. The source is reported to be from Hevers Pond and winds its way under the A25, around the cemetery, back under the A25 towards Ivy Mill Lane. It is hoped to do some complimentary planting in due course. The bulbs have come into full bloom throughout the village and are a credit to the village and particularly the small band of “in Bloomers” who planted them all over the last couple of years. It is a shame however to see that there are

some who appear to have no respect for their environment and insist on destroying the flowers that the vast majority of us enjoy. The St Catherine's School Gardening Club is enjoyed by its young members and they all enthusiastically take home what they learn, sometimes leaving parents with loaded arms at school pick up time. Hopefully the weather will be kind this year and they will be able to enjoy the fruits of their labour in the summer.

CCTV: This year's contract was put out to tender to ensure that we continue to get best value for money for the residents. Confirmation of who will be asked to hold the contract will be made at the meeting on 18th May. Costings for a new location for metal mickey are currently being sought. The new police CCTV system has now been installed in front of the Coneybury Stores. It is hoped that this will lead to fewer antisocial incidents in this location.

Cemetery: During the winter months our contractor undertook to clear the overgrown vegetation from within the cemetery. This has resulted in the cemetery appearing much more open. Some of the old neglected graves that were covered with brambles are visible once more. Further clearance work will be undertaken in the winter months again. The Council are currently investigating the possibility of creating a "Memorial Garden" or "Rose Garden" for the burial of ashes. This is still very much in the investigation stages. The burial fees have been reviewed following consultation with neighbouring parishes and it was agreed that ours needed to be brought in line with the surrounding areas. The new fees are effective as of 1st April 2009.

Dog Fouling: The new bin located on Rabies Heath Road is being used but there are still owners who persist in not cleaning up after their dogs. There are also others who feel it appropriate to vandalise the dog bins. Once again a plea to all dog owners to be responsible and clear up after their animals – no one likes to step on dog mess so don't leave it for others to step on.

Financial: The Parish Council have agreed to provide Bletchingley Playground Friends with £10,000 towards the playground project.

Footpaths – Overgrown: Various footpaths have been reported as having overgrown vegetation. Please notify the Clerk if you are aware of any footpaths so that these details can be notified to SCC Highways responsible for footpaths, or you can report these direct using the SCC/TDC website.

Footpath 506: The matter has finally been concluded. A cheque was received through the lawyers for the awarded sum of £24,702.54. This was then returned in full to the Insurers. The insurers agreed to waive the 10% excess, which had not been deducted from reimbursements from the insurers. This was agreed in acknowledgement of the work undertaken by Bletchingley Parish Council and its lawyers in bringing this matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

Hevers Pond: This is an ongoing process but we have persevered and it now looks as if the licence to undertake essential maintenance work on Hevers Pond will be made available to the Parish Council and Friends of Hevers Pond. The Parish Council have agreed to contribute a sum of £200 towards the costs of the production of the licence, subject to its approval. It is hoped that an update will be available for the meeting in May.

Highway Issues: Several highway issues are still being pursued, namely: (i) the state of Church Lane and Whitehill Lane; (ii) the lack of road markings at the junction near the Red Lion and (iii) highway improvements to the A25 in the village. The yellow zig zag lines have finally been reinstated outside St Catherine's School and new ones painted at the entrance of Barfields and Church Lane. SCC currently can only provide the Community Gang to our location once every 7 weeks so jobs are done on a health and safety priority basis and due to the conditions this winter, there has been a backlog of general issues usually dealt with by the Community Gang as a result of them being seconded elsewhere.

Litter picking: A date will be confirmed for a litter picking event prior to Bletchingley in Bloom judging in July. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK who hired the hall in 2007 for a Peace Seminar requested to help with this event. More details will follow once finalized.

North Park Farm and Sibelco UK Ltd: Correspondence has taken place between Sibelco and the Quarry Observation Group (“QOG”) and it now appears that Sibelco are ready to sign the Terms of Reference at the next North Park Community Liaison Committee, which has yet to be arranged. The recent exhibition held by Sibelco UK Ltd at the Community Centre on 25th February 2009 to discuss the Pendell Extension had been very well attended and hopefully most people’s questions had been answered.

Parish Council Vacancy – A further vacancy has arisen in the Parish Council, which was advertised in March 2009. 2 candidates have come forward who will now both be co-opted onto the Parish Council at its Annual Meeting due to be held on Monday the 18th May. This meeting is a week later than usual to ensure that the majority of councillors are present.

Police Issues – There appears to be an increase in burglaries, although for the time being this does not appear to have affected Bletchingley too much. A new PCSO is scheduled to start on the 1st April. Residents are requested to continue to maintain vigilance of their property and possessions and not to hesitate in reporting incidences. The Home Office had now published an updated Guide to Home Security which PC N Shrapel has copies of. Please contact your Neighbourhood Watch coordinator if you require a copy, alternatively the Clerk for a copy. These will also be handed out with the Newcomer packs.

Stychens Lane Playground Field: Clearance work has been undertaken at the bottom of the field to open out the area by clearing away overgrown brambles and planning to remove the fallen tree trunks.

Village Emergency Plan - A draft plan has been put together by the Parish Council. The aim of the plan is to enable community support, self-help and resilience when faced with an emergency and when assistance from the Emergency Services and other responders is delayed. Whilst the Parish Council has no legal obligation to produce the document, it is felt that the Parish Council has local knowledge of what resources are available in the event of an emergency and who may be most affected. Should anyone have any specific resources they feel would be essential in an emergency and would like to provide that information on the plan, then please contact the Clerk for further details.

Website: Please contact the Clerk if you have any comments or wish to include any village events or news on the website.

Bletchingley Golf Club – Land Regeneration for New Practice Facilities – The Parish Council have been approached by the Bletchingley Golf Club to gain access via the White Post Grazing Field to their property in order to create new practice facilities. The Parish Council have agreed in principle, subject to safeguards, controls of operations, restoration and payment. Consideration of the current Tenant’s demands have been taken into account and Bletchingley Golf Club have agreed to contact the owners of properties at Chevington Villas to update them direct. Should planning consent be granted, it is envisaged that this work will start in Spring 2010 and last about a year. It should, during this time, see a reduction in the number of large lorries travelling through the village.

Affordable Housing – Some Parish Councillors met with representatives from Surrey Community Action (SCA) and Tandridge District Council (TDC) to review possible sites in the village for affordable housing. A report was made by SCA and presented to TDC on the viability of these sites. Should any of these sites prove suitable, it will be SCA/TDC who will approach the landowners direct to discuss the matter.

Robin Gater – Chairman