

## **BLETCHINGLEY PARISH COUNCIL REPORT**

### **NOVEMBER 2009 to JANUARY 2010**

**Annual Parish Meeting** – Please make a note in your diaries that the date set for this year’s Annual Parish Meeting is Monday the 24<sup>th</sup> May.

**Allotments and Old Allotment Field:** The Little Common Lane Allotments were purchased back in 2009 from Thames Water by the Parish Council to secure this facility for the residents of Bletchingley. A loan was secured from the Public Works Loan Board to cover the cost of the purchase and the cost of the creation of additional plots on the Old Allotment Field. There are covenants that are attached to the Little Common Lane Allotments which do not allow the placement of storage structures, particularly on the southern boundary so requests for storage sheds has been declined on this site. In light of the costs involved with the allotments the Parish Council felt it necessary to increase the rents accordingly. Therefore from 1<sup>st</sup> April the rents will be increased to £20 and £25 per plot per annum. It was also agreed that only those providing proof of income support/benefit would be able to apply for the reduced rate of £20.

The land at the Old Allotment Field is scheduled to have the work started on it shortly. First the area will be appropriately sprayed and then ploughed. The area will be fenced with rabbit proof fencing and there will be an area of hardstanding for parking of up to 4 vehicles via key entry only. There will also be a water supply similar to that at the other allotment site. It is hoped to have these additional plots ready fairly early in the growing season.

The water is scheduled to be turned back on around the beginning of March, weather dependant of course.

**Affordable Housing Survey** – Surrey Community Action have undertaken a survey on the needs of affordable housing in Bletchingley. There was a good response with 251 questionnaires returned, equating to 19% of households. 65% stated they were in support of the scheme, 33% not in support and 2% with no answer. 29 households filled out the needs section. There is therefore a good case for taking this process forward to the next stage but this will be discussed at the Parish Council meeting in March.

**A25 Highway Improvements for Bletchingley** – Following further discussion and meetings with SCC Highways and cuts in budgets, the Parish Council agreed that the most important highway improvement that should be considered was the need for a crossing at Grange Meadow. This had been requested in relation to Safe Routes to Schools for several years and was now more vital with the location of the new playground. SCC agreed that they would this financial year undertake a Feasibility Study of this project and report back with plans for comments. The pavement at the top of Little Common Lane would be repositioned slightly to improve sightlines for pedestrians crossing at the junction. The other high street improvements would require more consultation.

**Winter conditions on the Highway** – In light of the recent winter conditions the country has experienced and government restricting the salting routes to only the major A roads and motorways to try to conserve salt reserves, Surrey County Council (“SCC”) is in the process of consulting with Parish Councils on improvements. SCC have confirmed that they had sufficient salt reserves whilst some Councils did not. A proposal has been put to SCC to include Little Common Lane, Big Common Lane and Pendell road as a priority route 1 and Rabies Heath Road as priority route 2 in the event of future winter conditions. The salt bins are all filled once a year and then future fills will depend on resources, not only of salt reserves but also of man power and vehicles available. 2 additional salt bins have been requested, one for the top of St Catherine’s Cross and the other for Clare Cottages. The salt in these bins is provided for use on the associated junctions and not for personal use on drives

etc. Salt for your own use is usually available from local builders merchants and at a very reasonable price. The salting of the roads in icy conditions is down to the SCC Contractor under the terms of their agreement. In any future snow events, if there are any complaints about particular locations, please forward these details to the Clerk who will make a note of them before forwarding on to the contact at SCC responsible for Highways in snow conditions.

**Potholes:** Please could any known potholes be reported direct to the Clerk so that a list can be compiled of the known locations which will then be forwarded on to Highways. Unless a pothole is reported to SCC Highways, any claim for insurance relating to the pothole is likely to be disregarded on the basis that they were not aware of the hole and therefore did not have an opportunity to inspect and repair it.

**Bletchingley in Bloom:** The small band of workers have agreed once again to enter the In Bloom competition and have ideas/projects in mind. They are still seeking more members/volunteers, even if on an adhoc basis. Many hands make light work. If you feel that you have a suitable project, which they could help with, then please get in touch with any of the Bletchingley in Bloom members or the Parish Clerk. The first project for this year is the creation of a bed on Rabies Heath Road. Judging will be between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> July. Get your gardens and surrounding areas tidied up for the event and beyond.

**Bletchingley Grange Meadow Play Area** – The new playground opening went very well with the weather being reasonably kind. Despite the cold, wet and wintry weather, the playground has been used fairly constantly since the opening and feedback has been very good. The Social Club will hopefully soon be advertising additional times that they will be open for park users to use their facilities. An ideal time to have a cup of hot tea or coffee and a chat whilst the kids are having fun.

**Cemetery:** You may have noticed that further winter clearance has been undertaken in the cemetery with more of the overgrown areas being opened up and old graves revealed. If anyone has an old unwanted metal watering can, that still works, which they would like to donate to the cemetery, I am sure those who regularly attend graves would appreciate it. If anyone would be interested in forming a volunteer working party to continue with this clearance, then please contact the Clerk.

**Christmas Lights:** Many of you will have seen the Christmas Lights in the tree behind the Post Office which were sponsored by the Village Fair Committee and the Parish Council. It is hoped that these will be added to later this year.

**Dog Mess:** This continues to be a problem with some owners not clearing up after their dogs. Please could you ensure that you do clean up after your dog. Any known occurrences to be reported to the Clerk who will pass the information on to Tandridge District Council. No one likes to inadvertently walk in a pile and then walk in their house with it still on their shoes – so please clean up after your dog.

**Hevers Pond:** The Parish Council are still pursuing RH&RW Cluttons for some form of agreement to allow agreed work to be undertaken on the maintenance of the pond.

**Minerals:** The Parish Council has been asked to comment on applications to extend North Park Quarry to Pendell and to prolong the life of the sand processing plant until 2022. This site is within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where the development needs to be justified on the grounds of strategic national need for the sand. As today's recession has reduced this need, we believe that there is no such justification. Also the aquifers beneath Pendell supply our drinking water and require particular protection. So largely on these grounds we have objected to the plans and asked that permission to develop Pendell be refused. We want an end to local dust problems, and an end to the scar of the

quarry in the landscape and we hope that North Park Farm will be fully restored by 2016 as originally planned.

**Parish Plan** - The Parish Council is currently looking for more volunteers to be part of a Steering Group to help create a Parish Plan for Bletchingley. This a community led group with only a Parish Council representation. It is your opportunity to help to create a vision for your village, which organisations and individuals can then work towards to make it become a reality. Those who have volunteered will be contacted shortly to arrange an initial meeting to discuss the process. The meeting will be advertised once finalised. Please feel free to attend to see what it is all about, even if you are unsure as to whether you want to be involved or not.

**Surrey Police Changes** – There has been a lot in the media recently about this and as a result Surrey Police arranged 2 evenings, one held at Smallfield to explain the proposed changes. Due to the government forcing cut backs, Surrey Police are over the next few years undertaking a review of their premises and staff. They believe that by closing some of the smaller police stations which are either too expensive to maintain or are not utilised by the public, these police stations can then be housed in more appropriate locations on a shared basis, which provides far better public access and support for both the police and the public. These locations are likely to be in buildings such as the District Councils, public libraries or even fire stations. Each location will be looked at on its own merit. The main stations will obviously remain open as normal. The police are also looking at providing small satellite sites where local neighbourhood police officers can have access to computer facilities and be able to start their duties from within their dedicated area. Parish Councils are being asked to put forward suggested locations for these when required. The Surrey Police will also be restructuring their force and losing through natural wastage some of their top level staff. All these measures will, over the next few years see an increase of about 200 new neighbourhood police officers. Of this number, around half will be visible, i.e. on foot patrol, whilst the other half will be involved with behind the scenes work.

**Police:** There has been an increase across Tandridge in theft from motor vehicles and damage to vehicles and also theft from sheds. There has also been an increase in poaching and theft from farms. **All are urged to be vigilant and report anything unusual or suspicious to the Surrey non emergency contact number 0845 125 2222 unless a crime is actually taking place in which case use 999.** Please review security arrangements on garden sheds and outbuildings and mark property with your postcode and house number. The Crime reference number relating to damage to motor vehicles in the Church Lane area is **TD/10/638**. The crime reference number relating to parking issues, particularly around Church House is **TD/10/640**. If calling the 0845 number in relation to the use of motorbikes, either on the fields or incorrectly on the roads, please quote **TD/09/2042**. This may reduce the time waiting to be connected to the correct person.

**Village Gateways:** The gateways have been agreed and ordered. Some funds have been agreed from the Tandridge Local Committee towards the cost of the provision of these gateway signs.

**Website:** Village diary events and local news are being updated daily so please do check the Bletchingley website (<http://www.bletchingley.org.uk/> for the latest Parish News and events in Bletchingley. Anyone who wants to publicise a local event or club or has some local news to impart please contact [sally.ray@btinternet.com](mailto:sally.ray@btinternet.com).

Robin Gater – Chairman