

BLETCHINGLEY PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

OCTOBER 2008 to DECEMBER 2008

Adoption of BT Phone Kiosk in Brewer Street – The Parish Council have adopted this red BT Phone Kiosk as it believed it was a landmark worth retaining within the conservation area. The adoption of the Kiosk costs £1 and then there is a yearly fee for the supply of the electricity to the box, which is around £24.00 per year. Local neighbours have agreed to maintain the surrounding vegetation.

Allotments: A skip was provided for the use of the allotment holders to remove any long outstanding unwanted items. This service was very well utilised. The long section of hedge has now been cut and the adjoining section of grass strimmed. Allotment holders are asked to ensure that their plots are adequately maintained. The Parish Council agreed at its December meeting to increase the allotment fees to £17.50 and £15.00 for concession rate.

Bletchingley in Bloom: The 2nd phase of the perennial amenity beds has been dug near the village sign and planting takes place on the 13th December. Coppard Plant Hire very kindly donated the use of a turf machine for the initial phase of the bed preparation, for which the team were very grateful. The tree on the green closest to the front of the Red Lion has now been trimmed and hopefully the benefit of this will be seen once the new leaf growth starts in the spring. Bulb planting at various locations in the village took place in October. Preparations for the new Gardening Club at St Catherine's School are well underway, with the potager beds having been re-dug in preparation for the early start in January when school returns. Bletchingley Parish Council have confirmed their commitment to continue to support Bletchingley in Bloom with its work.

Bus Stop – Moss clearance: Our contractor has cleared the excess moss from around the bus stop in front of the Red Lion and also sprayed the moss in order to ensure that the moss entrenched in the tarmac is destroyed without breaking the tarmac. A further spray will be undertaken to ensure a lasting effect.

Cemetery: Now that the grass has stopped growing with the colder weather, our contractor is undertaking vegetation clearance within the cemetery. It is hoped that this will open out the cemetery more and improve its overall appearance. Additional work-days will be added if required once the usual grass maintenance takes over next year.

Dog Fouling: A further plea to all dog owners to clean up after their dog. A new bin has been located on Rabies Heath Road. The original preferred site on the corner of Knightingale Way was discarded due to the proximity of neighbouring back gardens.

Financial: The Notice of Conclusion of Audit for the year ended 31 March 2008 was publicised. The only queries raised were in relation to the Fidelity Guarantee cover, which the Parish Council believed was appropriate and the adoption of the new Model Publication Scheme, which was subsequently adopted at the November meeting.

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: In 2003 Bletchingley Parish Council wrote to Mr Herrtage requesting that he cease immediately to drive his motor vehicle along the restricted section of Footpath 506. Mr Herrtage responded by stating that he had a legal right to vehicular access to the rear of his garden along Footpath 506. Mr Herrtage then proceeded to threaten the Bletchingley Parish

Council with legal action unless we withdrew and publicly apologized for our previous statement regarding his claimed use of Footpath 506.

Mr Herrtage proceeded to take out a County Court claim for defamation against individual Bletchingley Parish Council members, the Bletchingley Parish Council as a whole, District and County Councillor Myland and Surrey County Council. Mr Herrtage's claims of defamation against each Bletchingley Parish Councillor and District and County Councillor Myland were later struck out by the County Court on the direction of HH Judge Reid.

Subsequently Mr Herrtage reported the Bletchingley Parish Council to the Standards Board. The Standards Board thereafter confirmed that the Bletchingley Parish Council had not breached any guidelines or standards.

Mr Herrtage then proceeded to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office regarding the conduct of the Bletchingley Parish Council. It was subsequently confirmed by the Information Commissioner's Office that there was no case to answer.

In January 2005, after a number of County Court Hearings, His Honour Judge Reid decided against Mr Herrtage's claim to have a right of vehicular access over Footpath 506. Full costs and interest were awarded to the Bletchingley Parish Council. An appeal to the High Court by Mr Herrtage was subsequently dismissed.

In August 2007 Mr Herrtage took out a second complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office regarding the conduct of the Bletchingley Parish Council. This finally went to an Appeal in February 2008 as Mr Herrtage challenged the Information Commissioner's decision notice. Mr Herrtage's Appeal failed.

In May 2008 Mr Herrtage attempted to take out a Defamation Claim against the Bletchingley Parish Council. HH Judge Reid confirmed that this was outside his jurisdiction and that defamation claims can only heard in the High Court.

Mr Herrtage has failed to pay any of the costs and interest awarded to the Bletchingley Parish Council, which has forced the Bletchingley Parish Council back to Court to recover the costs awarded. At the final Hearing on the 24th November 2008, HH Judge Reid made an Order for the sale for Wideways, 100 High Street, Bletchingley due to Mr Herrtage's failure to pay the awarded costs and accrued interest since January of 2005. HH Judge Reid confirmed to Mr Herrtage that he had until a date in January 2009 to pay the full costs and interest, failing which Hedley's Solicitors would then proceed to sell Wideways to recover the debt owed to Bletchingley Parish Council.

After the Court Order for sale was confirmed by HH Judge Reid on the 24th November, 2008 hearing, Mr Herrtage stated that he would pay into the County Court the costs awarded including interest. Hedley's have subsequently received confirmation from Guildford County Court that Mr Herrtage has paid a cheque for the costs and interest awarded. Our Solicitors are awaiting from the County Court the awarded costs and accrued interest.

The Parish Council unanimously thanked the Chairman for continuing to see this matter through to the end

Hevers Pond: Despite several attempts to finalise details of a licence through the correct channels, letters have now been sent to the Trustees of Hevers Pond notifying them of their legal obligation to ensure that the pond is maintained. It is now hoped that Bletchingley Parish Council will soon have the authority to advise Bletchingley in Bloom that they may proceed with the works required to ensure that Hevers Pond is adequately restored and maintained.

Highway Issues: Several highway issues are still being pursued, namely: (i) the lack of road markings at the junction near the Red Lion; (ii) highway improvements to the A25 in the village; and (iii) proposed yellow lines at various locations in Bletchingley. 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.

North Park Farm and Sibelco UK Ltd: A new North Park Community Liaison Committee has been set up and a constitution, including a schedule giving terms of reference on dust, has been agreed and is due to be signed at the next meeting of the Dust Sub-Committee on 15 December 2008. The Committee is made up of members from Sibelco UK Ltd, SCC, TDC, QOG, GVA, Bletchingley Conservation and Historical Society and Bletchingley and Godstone Parish Councils. It is envisaged that the new format of the meetings will ensure that there is two-way communication between the community and Sibelco UK Ltd and any grievances can be settled quickly and amicably. Details of who to contact in the case of complaints will be publicised in due course. The Liaison Committee will meet quarterly initially and then half yearly and the Dust Sub Committee will meet 6-weekly. The proposed Sibelco UK Dust Control Plan is more stringent than the SCC plan. The revised plan for the diversion of Bridleway 148 has been approved by the Liaison committee members.

Parish Council Vacancy – There is still a vacancy on the Parish Council. Anyone wishing to find out more about becoming a parish councillor should please contact the Clerk for more details.

Police Issues - The past three months have shown a considerable increase in the number of reported crimes compared with the same period last year. The serious attempted robbery at the Post Office coupled with motor vehicle damage, graffiti, possession of drugs, assaults, damage to property, and the ongoing late night disturbances must give residents in the village much concern. The Police are very much involved and are determined to enforce a firmer approach where they are able to do so. In the meantime residents are requested to maintain vigilance of their property and possessions and not to hesitate in reporting incidences.

Precept: In light of the increasing costs for maintenance etc and the proposed new playground, which the Parish Council will be supporting, the precept will be increased by £2,500 to £30,000 for 2009/10.

Website: New policies have been included on the website under Parish Council. Feedback from both local users and worldwide users is very positive. Please contact the Clerk if you have any comments or wish to include any village events or news on the website.

Robin Gater – Chairman