

Blunham Matters

THE NEWSLETTER OF **BLUNHAM PARISH COUNCIL**



PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

Join Us

Blunham Parish Council currently has 3 vacancies available for co-option. If you would like further information regarding becoming a Parish Councillor please contact the Clerk, or come along to a meeting. No experience is necessary as training can be arranged, just a desire to work for the benefit of the community.

Meetings take place bi-monthly on the last Thursday of the month at 7pm in Blunham Village Hall and usually last a couple of hours.

Currently the Council are considering the budget for 2024/2025 and projects for the forthcoming year. The Council has recently switched to a two-year fixed deal for the streetlighting electricity which has ensured that the costs have stayed the same, rather than the 50% increase advised by the existing supplier.

Recently when some land was offered for sale in the village there was a suggestion about the Parish Council considering purchasing it. There is an option for parish councils to take out loans to cover large capital purchases, but there is lengthy process involved as it requires proof that residents have been consulted about the project as it can have a long-term impact on the precept. Therefore it is not a quick process, but it is something that could be considered for large projects.

Blunham Community Fund

Just to remind you that grants are available to support worthwhile community groups/projects. The most recent grant was awarded to Blunham Good Neighbours.

Applying is simple and application form can be downloaded from the Parish Council website, or from clerk@blunham-pc.gov.uk.

Play Area Maintenance

You may have noticed that a large amount of bark chippings have recently been laid in the play area to improve safety on the equipment. This was a costly project, which has been covered by S106 funding. Over the years the cost of maintaining the play equipment has increased dramatically. Although there is some S106 funding available from CBC and other grants are available to replace equipment, these do not cover maintenance costs, those have to be funded by the Parish Council.

The Parish Council looks for the most cost-effective ways of maintaining the equipment, including ensuring any pieces still under warranty are referred back to the supplier to rectify. Due to the age of some of the equipment it is becoming uneconomic



or impractical to repair and therefore decisions need to be taken as to whether to remove or replace individual pieces of equipment. The Councillors understand that it is a well-used facility, especially during the summer months and will make every effort to maintain and improve the equipment. There are plans to replace the wooden bench with a recycled plastic bench which will be more economical to maintain, but other equipment may need to be removed due to maintenance costs.

Unfortunately, recently there has been some vandalism at the play area, where a fire was set on one of the climbing frames, this will need to be repaired, which adds to the costs.

The Parish Council are looking to arrange a working party to clean the equipment and if you would like to assist please contact the clerk for further details.

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Update

You should all have received a flyer giving you details of the Neighbourhood Plan Open Day on 2nd December at the Village Hall, early in the New Year the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will be sending out a questionnaire to help with the development of the neighbourhood plan. They look forward to hearing from you.k for further details.

Blunham P3 Group

Do you enjoy walking the footpaths around the village? Do you sometimes feel they are a bit overgrown, but are not sure who is responsible? Would you like to get involved? The Blunham P3 group is a small group of local volunteers who to help maintain footpaths around Blunham by supplementing the regular maintenance provided by landowners or funded by the council. This year they have been out on a number of occasions to clear fallen branches, or to cut back nettles and brambles along the paths beside the river, behind the school, and along the cycle path to Great Barford. The group is supported by the Parish and Central Bedfordshire Council, who provide training in the safe use of power tools, insurance, and some equipment.

Having coordinated the group for the past four years the time has come for Peter Ertl to move on, so the team are looking for a new administrator. The main role is to identify which paths need a trim, and to arrange a date when volunteers are available.

In addition P3 occasionally provide information to CBC on equipment and training requirements. If you feel that you would be like to be involved either as a team member, or could perhaps take on the role of coordinator, please contact the Parish Clerk for more details.

Blunham Parish Council would like to thank Peter for all his work with Blunham P3.

For more information on P3 groups please visit https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/82/countryside/433/countryside_volunteers.

War Memorial

This looked wonderful for Remembrance Sunday this year and we would like to thank all the volunteers who take time to look after it. In particular, we would like to mention Kevin Sheath who cleaned the Memorial in time for Remembrance Sunday.

Central Bedfordshire Council Public Space Protection Orders – in relation to dogs

CBC currently have a number of PSPOs, which have been in place since May 2021 (currently being reviewed), and the Orders include dog control and alcohol related anti-social behaviour (ASB) in public places.

In terms of dog control powers, this is through authorised officers, those who receive the training – predominantly council officers but can extend to park wardens/rangers, dog wardens etc. A breach of a PSPO can lead to a fine of up to £1000.

CBC currently use Dog Control Orders to:

- reduce dog fouling
- restrict dogs from places such as children's playground
- ensure dogs are kept on leads in specific areas

Dogs on leads

The Order prohibits persons from entering or remaining on land to which this Order applies when in control of a dog unless that dog is kept on a lead of not more than 2 metres in length, unless there is a reasonable excuse for doing so.

This includes any land which is open to air, to which the public have access and is: a cemetery, burial ground, garden of remembrance, a marked sports pitch, a designated carriageway, or a footpath adjoining a designated carriageway.

This order applies to the cemetery, churchyard and sports field in Blunham.

Dog fouling

If a dog defecates, the person in charge of the dog must immediately remove the faeces. Support/guide dogs are excluded. This applies to any land which is open to the air and to which the public are entitled or permitted to have access.

Dog exclusion zones

The Order prevents dogs from entering specified areas, such as children’s play areas, sports and games areas, unless they are service or support/guide dogs.

Dogs on lead by direction

A person in charge of a dog (on land covered by the Order) must put and keep that dog on a lead when asked to do so by an authorised council officer (if needed), to prevent nuisance behaviour by the dog that could annoy or disturb a person, bird or other animal. This includes any open land to which the public have access, which includes but is not limited to - parks, public open spaces, town centres, roads, pavements, public footpaths, byways, bridleways, woodlands, agricultural land, access land and common land.

Further details can be found on the CBC website www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

CBC Household Waste Recycling Centres (Tidy Tips)

From 1st November 2023 visitors to the recycling centres will be asked to show proof that they live in Central Bedfordshire.

The following documents will be accepted. UK driving licence, current council tax bill, Utility bill (gas, electricity, water) under a year old, HMRC or Home Office letter (under one year old), bus pass or disabled parking permit.

What’s happening at the Black Cat

- The Black Cat roundabout will remain open throughout construction, with some disruption. Any road closures will take place for limited periods, and there will be a 40mph limit through Black Cat roundabout during the build. You will see extensive work going on over time while we create the new A1 route beneath the A421/new dual carriageway.
- To begin with the team will start clearing vegetation areas around the Black Cat to make way for the construction of the new junction.



- Demolition of the Travelodge and Shell services will make space for the new A421/A1 northbound slip road. On the southbound side of the A1, demolition of the commercial properties between the Great North Road and Black Cat roundabout.
- Main Works will begin late 2023, early 2024 with the new road expected to open to traffic in Spring 2027.

Traffic management at Black Cat will involve

- 40mph speed limit on A1 northbound and southbound approaches to Black Cat roundabout and on A421 eastbound.
- Narrow lanes through the roadwork section.
- A satellite construction compound will be located just off the Black Cat roundabout using the existing quarry access. This compound serves the construction of the new junction at Black Cat.



How the Black Cat junction will work when finished

- Once the new dual carriageway is built the new three tier junction at the Black Cat roundabout will allow traffic to flow freely on the A1 by travelling under the junction.
- The A421 will cross over the A1 on a bridge, elevated above ground and continue to Caxton Gibbet.
- The connections between the A1 and A421 remain at ground level.
- The A1 will pass in a cutting beneath the A421 and the connections.

The Black Cat structure

The Black Cat itself is spending the next three years or so ‘resting’ in a secure location not far from its usual home. It will be well cared for by an experienced team of cat-lovers until it can return to a new vantage point.

Blunham Matters - Feedback

Blunham Parish Council would like your feedback on Blunham Matters – whether you find it useful, does the format work for you, what else you would like to see etc. Please email the Clerk with any suggestions.

THIS PUBLICATION

Would you like to write for this publication?

If you have something interesting to say about village life in Blunham, please submit it to us. We can publish one article per edition (500 words are about right, but no more than 1,000 maximum, please. We may need to edit it to fit).

Please send articles for inclusion in the next edition to:

clerk@blunham-pc.gov.uk

by **1st February 2024**
t. **07563 527415**



BLUNHAM GOOD NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Phone : 07480 999601 Mon – Fri 10:00am to 4:00pm

We are pleased to announce that the Blunham Good Neighbour Scheme (BGNS) volunteer service will be open to assist you from 15th May 2023. If you or someone you know needs support with the sort of help a good neighbour would offer.