

Chairman's Report 2018/19

The past year, as usual, has been busy for the Parish Council. The workload of Councillors continues to be substantial and varied.

During the year we have experienced some changes arising from Councillors leaving, for a variety of reasons. To those Councillors I would like to express my personal appreciation for your substantial input to the increasing workload of the Council. This I am sure is endorsed by fellow Councillors, the Parish Clerk and the residents of Bloxham:- your contributions have been greatly valued.

We have welcomed new Councillor's: - Amanda Baxter, Joanne Barton, Mike Morris and David Bunn.

The support and guidance that the Council has received from Theresa Goss, as both the Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, has been much appreciated.

Review 18/19

Land

- In last year's review it was noted that the Council had embarked on a process of compiling a definitive record of all the land owned by the Parish. The Council is still awaiting feedback in order to complete some of this work; in the main: -
 - the adverse possession of the parcel of land on Queen Street; Residents will recall that this area of unkept land had been fenced by the Council as part of a millennial project. The Council has been actively managing the Japanese Knotweed in this area for several years and has cleared the main area of overgrown vegetation and seeks in the future to carefully clear the ground to reveal the foundations of the old cottages and show these as an historic record of Bloxham.
 - acquiring two small areas of land on Gascoigne Way, that the Parish Council have been maintaining since the 1980's. Somehow these were omitted from the transfer by Cherwell District Council to the Parish.

Major S 106 projects

Phase 2 Play Areas

The Council hope that residents and visitors are pleased with the improved play areas at both the Jubilee Park and the Recreation Ground. Each of these areas rely on volunteers to help in the maintenance and Inspections required.

In total both phases of the Play Equipment improvement overran the S106 allocation, the Parish Council supplemented these funds from New Homes Bonus, taking the view that the improvements were long overdue and the benefits to residents were required.

In total projects had an overall cost of £108,732.77.

Village Halls

- The Ellen Hinde Hall successfully completed phase 1 of its improvements with help from the S106 funds in total £45,687.34.
- The Ex Serviceman's Hall is embarking on it's new build to facilitate additional storage, so freeing up space in the hall. The agreed S106 allocation for this project is £67,873.00.

- The Jubilee Hall is in the process of providing additional improved changing facilities and additional storage for the football club. The result of these improvements will enable additional meeting space to be created in the hall. The total agreed S106 allocation for this project is £326,000 plus a sum of £5,000 allocated from Parish Council funds.
- The Recreation Ground was allocated £39,790 via S106 funds for improvements to playing pitches and changing facilities. The trustees have been active in seeking quotes for improvements to the roof of the building and both the changing rooms and toilet facilities.

Multi use Games Area Warriner School

It is hoped that this project will be completed in the spring of 2019, and following a Community use Agreement will be available for village sports groups. The total S106 funds allocated to this project is £82,376.22

Monitoring Air Quality

- The Parish Council continue to work closely with Cherwell District Council monitoring the Air Quality in Bloxham.
- Following the 2017 Air Quality Report published by CDC, the Parish Council requested further monitoring diffusion tubes to be located near the mini roundabout at the junction of Church Street and Barford Road. We await the outcome in the next report.

Managing dangerous Parking

- This is still an issue in Bloxham, in the main in the vicinity of the Warriner School, the High Street, the area between the mini roundabout and the Church and the Primary School. Thames Valley Police, under an initiative by Cherwell District Council, carry out regular monitoring in these areas and have issued tickets.
- The only effective solution would appear to be for vehicle owners to show more consideration.
- The Parish Council has a small working group of Councillors and residents addressing a variety of issue to enable traffic calming throughout the village.
- With the help of Councillor Kieron Mallon and his Locality Fund, "A" Boards were purchased for the areas around the Primary and The Warriner Schools to remind car users to take care when dropping off and collecting pupils from the schools.

The Slade

This continues to be managed effectively by Marie Jones as volunteer Warden and a strong team of volunteers. Their efforts and support for this village asset are greatly appreciated.

- July 15th saw the official opening of the Slade as a registered Local Nature Reserve. A fantastic day followed with lots of activities undertaken and enjoyed, notably by the many children present.
- A Santa in the Slade event was held in December that was very well attended and effectively managed by the Scouts.
- Marie continues to organise events such as small mammal monitoring.
- The Parish council continue to seek the cooperation of dog walkers in keeping their animals on leads in this sensitive area.

The Environment

- The new footpath along the Barford Road was completed and has been received positively by residents. This was funded from the Wellington Park (Barford Road) S106 allocation.
- The Council undertook to clear the path leading from Green Hills Park to Queen Street to enable safe passage. It is a pleasure to record that Oxfordshire County Council have submitted a report to Modify the Public Footpaths of Bloxham to include this path. Special appreciation to Mrs Moyses for all her hard work together with the residents who supported her application to Oxfordshire County Council in bringing this to, hopefully, a successful conclusion.
- The Council continued to carry out the weed treatment and vegetation clearance for the land adjacent to Church View on Queen Street and have reinstated the fencing.
- The Council planted a substantial number of bulbs on the green areas at the end of Cumberford opposite the MFG Garage and the junction of Courtington Lane with the A361.
- “Purple for Polio” will be supported with bulbs being purchased from the Rotary Club this year and being planted outside the Primary School in the Autumn. The Parish Council will be supported in this planting by the Boys Brigade.
- Snow volunteers; the Council values the support of the hardy band of volunteers who help clear the snow/ice in areas of the village.
- The Council also appreciate the support of Bloxham School in carrying out some of the gritting along the High Street and for storing the grit and gritters on behalf of the Council.
- The maintenance of Parish Council trees: - to enable this to be managed more effectively the Parish Council have embarked on a tender process seeking a holistic approach to the management of the Parish Council’s trees.
- The Council took the decision to establish an Emergency Community Resilience Plan. This will ensure that procedures are in place should a major incident occur in Bloxham. This builds on the Emergency Plan that will come into use during localised emergencies. The working group consists of Councillors supported by a qualified resident with experience in such matters.
- Progress is being made to install a standalone defibrillator at the Ex Serviceman’s Hall. The Bloxham W I have agreed to support this venture by nominating this as their major fund raiser.

There are still concerns regarding: -

- Dog mess on pavements, the Public Rights of Way and the Bloxham Circular Walk.
- Farmers are expressing concern for the welfare of their animals both as a result of dogs not being kept on leads when animals are in the field and by the disregard of some dog walkers in clearing up after their dogs.
- The non-clearance of dog mess on the walks around the village has also been brought to the Councils attention by concerned dog owners/walkers.
- Residents have made many positive comments regarding the action taken by Mr Facon on the land leading to Hobb Hill.
- There have been reports of “free” camping in the Slade and on Hobb Hill, it should be noted that these areas are not available for camping. To date these have been managed effectively by the Slade Warden and the Land Owner.

Christmas Lights

The lights were installed in good time for the December 2018 celebrations, and what an effective display they made, lots of very positive comments received from residents. It is hoped to expand the location of the lights, with the support from residents.

Planning

Parish Councillors continue to comment on many planning applications each month. The Councillors rely on the Bloxham Neighbourhood Development Plan together with the Cherwell District Local Plan part 1 and the National Planning Policy Framework to enable effective and relevant responses to be made.

- The Parish Council are in the process of reviewing its Neighbourhood Development Plan to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.
- Recent consultation on the Oxfordshire 2050 plan and future Spatial Strategies and Growth Board decisions will no doubt have a further impact on Planning responses by the Parish Council.
- There has been some taxing planning application during the past year, namely
 - The Application for 136 Dwelling with access of Tadmarton Road
 - Bloxham Schools application for flood lights to the Hockey pitch
 - Retrospective application for the Car Park lighting for the Dewey Sports Centre
 - Wyatts Nursery for a residential dwelling
 - MFG petrol station Licencing Hearing to extend the licensing hours, resulting in the need for the lights to remain on overnight.
 - Planning Applications by MFG considered by the Council include: -
 - Retrospective Totem Poles and lighting
 - Fascia Lighting
 - Retrospective Canopy lighting
 - Appeal by MFG for time taken by CDC to refuse the above application
 - Retrospective revised canopy lighting.

The Council have also been involved in several meetings with Cherwell District Council Officers discussing concerns regarding the adverse noise and disturbance experienced by residents living adjacent to the Petrol Station , and the possibility of applying for a Review of the Licence.

- The Council continue monitoring the current developments in the village notably:
Miller Homes Tadmarton Road
 - The installation of a suitable footpath from the development and adjacent car park to the unmanned crossing. The County were called in to help rectify an inappropriate alignment of the footpath – which encroached into the road.
 - The stock fencing between the Country Park and the Slade Nature Reserve.
 - The safety fencing surrounding the attenuation pond in the Country Park.
 - The clearance of the drainage ditches leading from the site along the Tadmarton Road.

Miller Homes Milton Road: -

- The unapproved use of the proposed Amenity Area adjacent to Bloxham Mill and the Barford Road for tipping/storing top soil. In this process the Council was supported by resident involvement.
- The Council have raised residents' concerns regarding improvements to the street lighting on the Barford Road and the missing street light on the Tadmarton Road. Thankfully the street light has been reinstated on the Tadmarton Road. County are still reviewing the Barford Road.
- Councillors attended an exhibition for the proposed SEND school to be located at Bloxham Grove Road.
- Councillors have also been proactive in responding to the Oxfordshire 2050 plan and to the Examination in Public for Local Plan part one Oxford's Unmet Need.

Communication

- The Parish Council improved its website and now hopefully residents will find it simpler to access Council information.
- Bloxham Broadsheet; the Council undertook a revised method of reporting its business to residents, hopefully this makes more interesting reading.
- The Broadsheet, both paper and on line, has been used as a vehicle for alerting residents to the potential for “County Lines”; activity gangs coming from outside the village and targeting children regarding drugs or grooming.
- Drop in and Chat
 - The Parish Council continues to hold open sessions for residents and Bloxham Businesses on the second Saturday of each month at the Ex Serviceman’s Hall. The Council are grateful that the hall offers this facility at no cost.
- The Parish Council decided to review how it managed its workload and meeting schedule and after a trial period intend to continue with the following format: -
 - Two meetings a month of the full Council, continuing with the 1st Monday of the month and then alternating between the 3rd Tuesday or Wednesday.
 - By taking this action all Councillors are now involved in the issues relating in particular to Planning and the village Environment.
 - There is the facility to create discrete work groups, that may include support by residents, to tackle ad hoc issues. At present these include: -
 - Traffic Calming measures for the village
 - Review of the Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan
 - Reviewing and establishing a Community Emergency Plan.
- **Funding and Finance**
 - The Parish council continues to include within its budget, funding for: -
Maintenance work for the Recreation Ground and the Jubilee Park grassland,
St Marys Thursday Club,
and has agreed to include it in its 2019/2020 budget, funding for the Bloxham Fun Day.
 - The Parish Council promoted the Cherwell District Council initiative and supported organisations such as the bowls club in applying for funding. It is hoped that organisations will apply for the new Cherwell District Council fund in 2019/2020.
 - The Cherry Tree Centre has been funded for three years via New Homes Bonus and funds from Oxfordshire County Council. The Oxfordshire grant stops in 19/20. The Parish Council needs to consider if it will continue funding the Centre via its budget, this may result in a future increase in the Precept.
 - For 2019/2020 the precept increase for a Band “D” property is 0.41%

The future

- To continue to monitor the Air Quality through the village and seek methods to improve it.
- To continue to use the BNDP and Local Plans to ensure that any development within the built limit of the village is in line with the Policies contained within them notably: -
 - To support services for the young and elderly of the village, such as the St Marys Thursday Club and the Cherry Tree Centre.

- *Residents need to decide if these services are to continue and should this be done via funding from the Parish Precept as the County funding decreases.*
- To secure a safe cycle route to Banbury as part of the A361 improvements.
- To improve the timeline for road repairs via the recruitment of a “pothole champion”
- To continue to ensure that the Slade Nature Reserve is an environment for education for the young and old and specially to create a space to appreciate the wild life that surrounds us.
- To ensure the continued viability of the Bloxham Circular Walk, by working with land owners and dog walkers.
- To seek to establish a library facility for the village.
- To improve communication between the Council and residents.
- To ensure that Bloxham flourishes as a cohesive and safe village.