

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

28th May 2024

7:30 – 9:00PM

AT BLAKEDOWN SPORTS PAVILION

We'll be talking about

THE BLAKEDOWN SHOP & POST OFFICE

– WHAT NEXT?

Also

Updating the Neighbourhood Plan

Reports from your District & County Councillors

and a report from your local Police

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED

2023 – A (SLIGHTLY) QUIETER YEAR

Looking back at last year's (2022-3) newsletter, these last twelve months seem to have been much more settled for the Parish Council. For a start, our 'new' Clerk, Louise Sahota, has been in post for a full year and has spent her time sorting out the bank accounts for the Parish Council and the Villages Trust (which took an inordinate amount of effort), tightening up procedures and policies, monitoring maintenance contracts and being the first point of contact for residents reporting problems or questions about parish issues. We're very pleased to have Louise on the team and delighted that she's enjoying the job, getting to know the villages and the community. At the same time, our Lengths man Bill Waldron has just retired (from here and from four other Parishes). We'd like to thank him for the huge contribution he has made to keeping the village looking good over the years.

We'd also like to thank the amazing volunteers who regularly go out litter picking around the village – they really make a difference and are very much appreciated. In support of their efforts, we've also been working to make sure that we have the right size litter bins in the right places and are keeping a close eye on how quickly they need emptying.

It seems amazing that it's already a year since the revamped Blakedown Village Car Park was opened for users. Inevitably, it's not without problems – there are times when it is full, users don't always park properly, and sometimes use the disabled or charging bays and the hatched areas inappropriately. But importantly, it brings in an income, rather than being a drain on Parish (or District) Council funds. So, we're keeping it in good condition, preserving this village asset for the duration of the 20 year lease at least.

Otherwise, it's been a year of business as usual; monitoring the progress of the proposed development on the land off Station Drive; continuing discussions with WCC Highways on traffic issues, especially through Stakenbridge and Churchill; managing spiralling costs to stay within budget – which has led to the increase in the Precept for 2024 which you will have recently seen on your Council Tax bills.

LOOKING FORWARD

Our Neighbourhood Plan needs to be updated to reflect changes to the Villages over the last eight years, and to prepare for developments which we know are coming, both in the villages and in the surrounding areas. It's a (hopefully) shorter process than when the Plan was first compiled, and there will be a consultation period so that everyone can be kept up to date with current thinking. We're just starting the work and hope to complete it within the next year – we'll keep you informed through the Parish Council web site. (See address on page 4)

In the news now – there's an opportunity for a new tenant for Blakedown Village Shop. It's a small unit, benefits from the co-sited Post Office, and is an important community resource. The idea of a Community Shop has been floated – outside the remit of a Parish Council, but we are hoping that the Annual Parish Meeting can bring residents together to explore whether that would be feasible, or to suggest other appropriate solutions. It is a privately owned property, but in the interests of village sustainability we want to make sure that all possible opportunities and suggestions to retain this facility have been explored.

Do come along, and meet the Councillors and other residents, have your say, ask questions, join in – or just listen!

The Figures

Please note that these figures below represent the financial status of Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council as at 31st March, 2024 and are subject to external audit. Residents are allowed to view the accounts within a 30-day set time frame, this includes without question the first 10 days of July and you will be able to find the details of the full period via the **NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION OF UNAUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN** due to be shown on the parish council website www.churchillandblakedown-pc.gov.uk and the three parish council notice boards.

Income

During the year, we received a total of £43,739. This was made up of the precept (£34,019) and other income including the Lengthsman allowance from WCC at £2,592, £2,379 from WCC and WFDC towards grass cutting and bin emptying, £500 from Cllr Marcus Hart, and £3931 from Instavolt for the rent of the two EV charging car park spaces.

Expenditure

By category, this is what we spent in the year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024:-

Category	£
Employee Costs (incl Pension, tax and NI)	12,228
Other administration i.e. IT maintenance, payroll administration, hall hire, current account fees, audit fees, training and election fees	3,788
Insurance	1,232
Donations and Grants	700
Memberships	1,180
Newsletter	431
Lengthsman	2,228
Environment i.e. Grass cutting and bin emptying contracts plus other areas not in contract, Handyman, and planters	14,380
Defibrillator	131
Energy – Lighting Unmetered Supply & repairs	2,480
Car park – repairs and maintenance	366
Kings Coronation event	836
TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR	£39,980
Balance to go into General Reserves	£3,759

The Bank reconciliation at 31st March 2024 states:

Bank Reconciliation for the period 1 st April 2023 to 31 st March 2024	
	£
Lloyds Instant Current Account balance at 31/03/24	24,096.07
Unity Bank Treasurers Account balance at 31/03/24	2,986.55
Lloyds Treasures Account (Signal Box) at 27/03/24	2,246.56
Balance carried forward to 1st April 2024	29,329.18

Opening Balance as per 1st April 2023	19,345.10
Add receipts for the period	56,003.57
Less payments for the period	-46,029.81
Payments unrepresented at the bank at 31/03/24	10.32
Closing balance for the year 23/24	29,329.18

Stow

Chair (2023/4)

Keep up to date by coming to the meetings, following the website <https://churchillandblakedown-pc.gov.uk> , or the Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/689908751214651>, or contacting clerk@churchillandblakedown-pc.gov.uk.