



Chairman's Report 2024/5

The Team

Blunsdon Parish Council is a small team of volunteers supported by an even smaller team of paid employees who work hard to provide you the residents with a clean, safe and beautiful place to live. There are nine Parish Councillors; **Martin Nash, Ian Selwood, Jim Tayler, Sandra Keates, Mike Compton, Peter Hughes, Paul Weston, Kingsley Poulton and myself**. We sadly lost one of our ex-Councillors recently, he was Chris Rogers, who also did an enormous amount for charity. Our condolences to Laurie and his family. We also lost our longest serving Councillor Mike Compton whose loss of mobility has restricted his ability to attend and act for us. His wealth of knowledge and experience will also be sorely missed. We all give up our time, free of charge to do this. I can't thank them enough for the work they do. **Tracey Judd** our Parish Clerk for 9 years decided to retire this year, I can't thank her enough for the way she has supported the Parish Council through those times. I would also like to thank **Debbie Braiden** who is our Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer and her knowledge and experience makes sure the Council remains within the law, she is ably assisted by **Claire Boles**, Assistant Clerk and our caretaker **Mark Jones**.

We are constantly looking for ways to reduce our administration so we have 'Re-branded' the Parish website and put in an on-line booking system for the Village facilities which, after some teething problems, is working well.

We had a wonderful event to celebrate **DDay80** – lighting a 'beacon of peace' in Paul Medlock's beautiful garden. A fantastic number of you celebrated and watched the fireworks as other beacons lit across the Thames Valley.

'Keeping it clean, keeping it safe, keeping it beautiful'

As a Council, we all believe in this vision, however it becomes harder and more costly to achieve this every year. We used to be able to rely on our Borough Council to provide statutory services along our roads and verges, along our walkways and public footpaths. But now as their resources are continually cut back by Central Government the 21 Parishes in Swindon have begun to take over these necessary services. We rely on feedback from you and are supported by our Ward Councillors where they can and we will continue to try and improve the Parish.

Parish Projects

Although the Parish has been ravaged in the recent past by developers taking advantage of a weak Borough Plan, and a lack of housing nationally there have been small benefits.

Developer Contributions have enabled us to provide safer and better services to our increasing population.

- We have gained a beautiful Community Building at Hayfield which houses the Community Shop and Café. During the year the Shop Committee supported by the Parish Council found funding to add solar panels to the building to significantly reduce costs. An 'In Post' locker system was installed providing a well-used facility for residents.
- We have gained a beautiful extension to our Cemetery which will provide for the future need in the Parish.
- We have replaced the ageing Village Maps with up-to-date versions and added one to the top of High Street/Ermin Street.
- We now have a lovely Community Allotment and seating area from what was a piece of uncared-for space.
- We have made improvements to the Pavilion at the recreation ground and more to come.
- We have begun the refurbishment of the old tennis courts in Linley Road, providing a modern and safer area for the Primary School to use during the day and for residents to hire for their chosen recreation.
- We have begun to provide improvements to safety along Ermin Street, with new planting and new road markings to slow traffic down. We will continue to campaign for a reduction of the speed on

Blunsdon Hill and (although not in our Parish) work with the Borough to improve safety between the bottom of the hill and the schools and surgery in Tadpole Garden Village.

- There are plans to downgrade Broadbush as a major thoroughfare with more calming measures, and further areas of 20 MPH around the Village to prevent rat-running.

Parish Assets

The Grade II listed Village Hall, our greatest asset, like all of us is getting older and now requires constant maintenance. Our main investment this year will be to replace both main doors which will be costly.

The new Community building maintenance is a net cost in that we lease it to the Shop for a 'peppercorn' rent.

The Churchyard and Cemetery just need constant attention by our Grounds Maintenance team to keep them beautiful.

We are investing in the Pavillion where we can while we try to seek funding to complete a major refurbishment to improve its accessibility.

The Recreation Ground maintenance is a partnership between the Football and Cricket Clubs and the Parish.

Our allotments are generally well kept and we still have some available for residents.

Planning in the Parish

Here we are another year on and repeating the same concerns. These will be based around the Kingsdown Development and the difficulties we will endure during its construction. The final detailed plans have not yet been agreed between Persimmon and Primegate and Swindon Planning Authority, however developer contributions have been set aside for mitigation measures to limit 'rat-running' through the village – but these are a long way off yet. The Highways Authority have imposed a series of measures and controls to improve road safety at the Turnpike/Cold Harbour junction and any major development outstanding/planned for the Parish is on hold until these measures are in place and working. We will always keep a watching brief and do everything we can to ensure the Parish is not affected in a major way. The Neighbourhood Plan is helping in the planning process, ensuring local needs are considered with every application. The Swindon Local Plan is under Review and Consultation at the moment and we will ensure the NP is updated in line with it to strengthen the protection the Parish needs against speculative development.

Speedwatch

The team of volunteers have again done a fantastic job of keeping road safety high on our priority list. Their regular reports have prompted many Police visits to our speeding 'hotspots' which have led to many prosecutions. So a massive thank you to **Brian Chapman**, who administers their results, **Mike Helyer** who organises the timetables, **Maggie Fisher**, **Peter Hughes**, **Hugh Milsom**, **David Storey**, **Laura Fitchett**, **Des Boshier** and **Roy Drinkwater** who give up their valuable time to keep you safer on the roads. They are a brilliant team and are always looking for more volunteers as the Parish grows.

The Future

We have a lot on our hands with the amount of projects with which we are involved. We have a great team of Councillors and staff, supporting these projects which will enhance the Parish and improve the service to residents. We do have a couple of vacancies for Councillors and if you are interested please contact Debbie our Parish Clerk.

Ian Jankinson

Chair – Blunsdon Parish Council

May 2025

Additional APA Reports May 2025 - PCllr Jim Tayler

Recreation ground -

Re seeding has been carried out again this year, thank you to the football club for achieving funding for this. Owing to unacceptable and irresponsible behaviour at the Rec, we are considering options to alleviate the problem by totally removing the large bushy area in the north eastern corner.

Cemetery

Our grounds maintenance team are now keeping it tidy , this will continue to be monitored by our operation managers. The new cemetery area will eventually be commissioned when the extra space is required so in the meantime will be kept tidy.

Village hall..

Under our lease agreement with the Church we have to carry out repairs and maintenance, we are working towards updating the entrance doors as these are starting to look shabby.

Community Building/cafe and shop .. we are pleased to see this wonderful asset being well supported. There is a regular surgery there, held by the Swindon Borough Ward Councillors on the first Saturday of each month.

Grounds Maintenance: PCllr Ian Selwood

Blunsdon is a semi-rural village location with a diverse mix of formal and rustic grassed, and hedge areas. The PC has defined areas of responsibility to maintain certain grassed and hedged areas, beyond these the Borough Council and Highways England have responsibility (although we monitor and report on any issues as they arise).

The PC are aware of our environmental responsibilities, and will consider a more balanced approach for some areas in terms of less grass mowing etc.to enhance habitats.

The PC will continue to monitor our contractors to help ensure we provide a tidy & green village, and provide best value within the financial budgets set. Additional projects will be considered to enhance the village further, where the budget allows. During the last year an element of grounds maintenance that was completed by an employed member of staff who resigned has been transferred to our existing GM contractor this additional work element is being monitored for continuity.

An additional area of maintenance has been added at the new community allotment area, that is being utilized by the preschool. The parish manages & identifies their areas of responsibility via parish online mapping portal that we have populated & updated as required through the year.

The existing contract with our GM contractor will be reviewed later this year as scheduled.

Recreation Ground

The PC has worked with the Football and Cricket Clubs during the year to manage their requirements, and any issues as they arise. The Parish has benefited from the active involvement of the FC & CC, in maintaining the pitches to their required standards.

The PC has been considering & costing remedial works & improvements to the pavilion building. The building is older & is not to the highest specifications, so all additional expenditure needs to consider this also.

It is noted that additional parking measures have continued to be maintained by the clubs during the year in Sutton Park, and this has resulted in improvements for residents. The PC are anticipating this situation should be helped further when additional parking spaces are available at Linley Road (ref MUGA) when the current construction phase is completed.

Footpaths

The PC does not have direct responsibility for footpath maintenance, this remains with the Borough Council.

The Community Building, Village Shop and Café- PCllr Sandra Keates

The shop committee continues to create external initiatives bringing additional income and creating community involvement. A new supplier for wine and successful wine tasting events, successful fund raising with a summer raffle bingo nights and monthly lottery are just a few.

This helps the committee in supporting local charities such as MacMillan, Prospect House and St Leonards school. For some time Uplands School have been offered supervised work experience adding value and support to pupils with learning disabilities.

Shareholders now have a loyalty card and recently a Blunsdon Themed merchandise of mugs and tea towels has been procured. These will soon be sold at Blunsdon house hotel as well as the shop.

All the above is added value to the Blunsdon Community.

A shop manager, Laura has been recruited who has lots of ideas to improve the shopping experience and is always open to suggestions. Of course all this could not be achieved without the many valued volunteers. Additional volunteers are welcome who would be offered training in both the shop and café.

Linley Road Refurbishment and Multi Use Games Area- PCllr Martin Nash

The Project started on the 7th April and is progressing on programme. Site set up & demolition of existing tennis courts complete. Drainage to new 12 space car park and pitch area now in progress. The next phase of work will be to form the pitch sub base, kerbs and surfacing to the courts. The project is due for completion in early July.