

BURTON OVERY PARISH COUNCIL

Chairperson's Annual Report for the Period: May 2023– April 2024

Current Councillors:

Cllr Bob Warwick - Chair
Cllr Sarah Rankine - Vice Chair
Cllr Rebecca Brown
Cllr Dave Fletcher
Cllr Bob Pain

Clerk to the Council: Phil Woodward

The Parish Council conducts its business through monthly face-to-face meetings in the village hall. Members of the public are warmly welcomed to council meetings, the agendas for which are advertised beforehand both on the Parish Council Noticeboard (which is located on the wall opposite Wheatridge on Main Street) and on the Burton Overy Noticeboard WhatsApp Group.

A total of eleven regular parish council meetings were held in the reporting period, namely one per month with the exception of the month of August. The council reviewed 21 planning applications including 12 full planning applications and 6 applications concerning trees in the conservation area. This compares to 32 applications received in the previous year (including 16 full planning applications). In a number of cases the parish council raised concerns, which lead to the submission of an amended application. As a result of issues raised, one application was referred to the full Planning Committee at the local planning authority (Harborough District Council - HDC), rather than following the usual process of delegation to the relevant HDC planning officer. These cases illustrate the very important role of the parish council in providing a focus for local opinion on plans that may impact upon the unique character of the village of Burton Overy.

Back in January 2019, following a local referendum, HDC approved the first-ever Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for the Parish of Burton Overy. As well as containing a wealth of information about the village and its environs, the NP has proved to be an important guide, to which the parish council regularly turns, when providing comments to HDC on planning applications. Equally importantly, the policies within the NP form part of the officially recognized framework used by HDC to decide on planning applications. It is now five years since the original NP was "made" and, following an in-house review, the parish council has decided that a fairly major revision of the NP should be undertaken. To that end, in late 2023, the parish council applied to *Locality*, the relevant government organisation, for grant aid for this purpose. Following the successful outcome of that application, we are pleased to report that the local consultancy, *Yourlocale Ltd*, will again be supporting the parish council through the various stages of the NP revision. In parallel the parish council has also been successful in its application for central funding for a *Design Code Study* and an up-to-date *Housing Needs Assessment* pertaining specifically to the village of Burton Overy. These studies are currently

being progressed by *AeCom*, a specialist national consultancy organisation. When available the conclusions of these studies will feed into the revised NP.

The involvement of members of the local community will be key for the successful revision of the NP. Given that this time round we are starting from an existing substantial document, namely the current NP, rather than from scratch, the parish council has taken the view that the best approach is for the community to be invited to comment once the majority of the proposed revisions of the NP are available in a draft form. To that end, the parish council is proposing to hold **a community meeting in the village hall on a Saturday morning sometime in May/June 2024** (date to be announced). At that stage a draft set of revised policies will be available for comment and scrutiny.

As reported in previous years, following significant expenditure on street lighting and the replacement of office equipment, the parish council has set itself the goal of rebuilding its cash reserve up to a prudent and sustainable level (as advised by organisations such as the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils). As virtually all of the parish council's income comes via the precept (i.e., the parish council component of the council tax collected by HDC), this has necessarily required above inflation increases in the precept request in recent years. For 2024/25 the precept request represented a 6.8% increase (as shown on your recent council tax demand!). We are very grateful to the village for supporting the parish council through the council tax mechanism.

The parish council administers two WhatsApp groups with somewhat different functions. The *Burton Overy Noticeboard* is used to circulate details of forthcoming parish council meetings and occasional information bulletins from HDC or LCC. The *Village Forum*, on the other hand, provides residents with a channel for discussing matters of local interest and for informal social contact. Currently there are 107 participants in the *Village Forum Group* and 97 in the *Burton Overy Noticeboard Group*.

From time to time the parish council hears concerns about both speeding vehicles and parking congestion in some village locations. Unfortunately, there are no easy solutions here. One recent development in relation to speeding has been the painting of roundels (circles with the speed limit inside) and dragon's teeth (jagged-edge markings at the side of the road) on the three approach roads to the village. At first Leicestershire County Council (LCC) Highways wanted to charge the parish council £3500 for this service, but happily they eventually relented and found some spare LCC Highways end-of-year cash!

The parish council oversees and maintains two public access defibrillators. These devices are kept in unlocked cabinets, one located on the outside wall of the Village Hall and the other at the Bell (on the outside wall of the foyer). In January this year, a man suffered a cardiac arrest at the Bell but survived thanks to those around him who were able to perform CPR and use the readily-to-hand defibrillator. Recently the parish council hosted a short training session in the village hall on how to provide immediate help to someone suffering from cardiac arrest. The session involved the showing of several short videos from the British Heart Foundation followed by some hands-on practical demonstrations. Expert advice was provided by a local resident, Phil King. The course was attended by 19 village residents and was well received.

King Charles III Coronation was held on 6th May. In Burton Overy, the celebrations included the showing of the coronation ceremony on a big screen and to mark the occasion the parish council commissioned a commemorative china mug produced by Edward and Lockett Ltd of Stoke-on-Trent. In keeping with the longstanding village tradition, and with the support of a generous grant from HDC, one of these mugs was gifted to every village youngster aged 16 or under. In addition, a commemorative rose was purchased by the parish council and installed along with a plaque on the grass verge next to the Queen's Jubilee Bench on Washbrook Lane (close to the entrance to Manor Farm).

Government guidance issued in May 2023 suggested that councils (including parish councils) should have a new duty to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. In that context, one of the initiatives the parish council is pursuing is the restoration and sustainable maintenance of natural ponds in the parish. One such pond is located in the Glebe field to the north-west of St Andrew's Church. Our ambition is to completely restore the pond and its immediate surroundings, so as to encourage the full range of biodiversity associated with natural ponds. Unfortunately progress on this project has recently stalled due to the rather unhelpful approach of the church authorities, who own the field. Hopefully, some progress will be possible in the coming year through collaboration with Lyndon Farms of Fleckney, who lease the field.

The village Christmas tree was installed in the south-east corner of the Banks Field (near the junction of Back Lane and Main Street) right at the beginning of December 2023, in time for the annual Burton Overy Christmas Tree Festival. This year's tree was large and looked quite impressive when adorned with lights and large baubles. Once again, the parish council would like to extend its thanks to all those involved with the setting up and the taking down of the Christmas tree.

There has been one change in the composition of the council since the last report. Cllr Nina Garner resigned early in the new year. We thank her for her service on the parish council and wish her and her family all the best for the future. Subsequently, Rebecca Brown was co-opted onto the parish council in February, 2024.

Cllr Bob Warwick

May 2024