Blockley Parish Council news – meet your newly co-opted councillor.

Steve Neill has responded to the call for new councillors to join the team at Blockley Parish Council. Steve is a relative newcomer to the village, but some readers will have met him at December’s Gloriana Concert in Blockley Church, where he served the drinks during the interval!

What prompted you to join Blockley Parish Council?

Whilst casually browsing through The Voice, I spotted the invitation to join the Parish Council and immediately put myself forward. I’ve had a taste of local politics before, and the best place to openly discuss these matters and residents’ concerns is around a table with a group of people who can facilitate change. Four vacancies remain unfilled, and the next Council Meeting is on Thursday 19th January at The Little Village Hall.

How long have you lived in Blockley?

I discovered Blockley in 2017 when I first met Meriel. We dated for a while, but we were both too raw from our previous relationships. We parted ways but kept in touch as friends. A year later, Meriel was working near Farnham, Surrey, where I worked. She called me, we went out for a pub meal, and it was at that moment when we both knew that we were right for each other. For a couple of years, I stayed over at weekends, commuting from here on a Monday morning back to Farnham, arriving back late on Friday evenings. I loved being here; Friday became Thursday, as I worked compressed hours at the garage in Farnham (and actually being more productive). With lockdown looming, I asked Meriel whether I could move in and make Blockley my home. Luckily, she said “Yes” and a month later we announced our engagement.

What do you like most about living in Blockley?

I can pin it down to four things – the warm welcome that I have received from the community (which I’m sure has everything to do with Meriel); the vibrancy of the community spirit itself; how Blockley’s heritage has been preserved and enhanced and the stillness of the clean air. The buzz and pollution are tangible on our return visits to Farnham, which has pockets of poor air quality that are akin to Central London!

Why are you interested in local politics?

In a way, I am scratching an old itch! Farnham’s air quality issue was one reason why I actively engaged in local matters during the years prior to meeting Meriel. The other main reason was the District Council’s Local Plan! Waverley Borough Council were expected to find space for 9,000 new homes to be built in London’s Green Belt and The Surrey Hills, which are an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Dunsfold Park, where the BBC film Top Gear, Cranleigh and Alfold were expected to take the bulk of the development, which would have merged the three villages into one conurbation, with only token improvements to infrastructure and transport links that could barely cope anyway! I was invited to stand for election as a Borough Councillor but moving here meant that was not to be.

What do you do for a living?

In the mornings – Monday to Thursday - I help Clive at Paxford Garage with his MOT bookings. I am a mechanic by Trade and my passions are classic cars and motorsport. When I am not working with Clive, I work with various motor trade and motorsport companies and organisations, seeking and securing pathways towards a sustainable carbon neutral future. It is complex and change undoubtedly is upon us. Yet, the future is unwritten, and, from my point of view, it is very, very exciting. I am well placed to bring some of these possibilities to the Parish Council table, as we explore the sustainable – and affordable - options that may suit Blockley. Home should be a safe space, and for many people their cars are too, which must be a consideration.

This is just one of the burning questions that Blockley Parish Council faces. If anyone would like to find out more or add their voice to the Council by becoming a Councillor please join us at the next meeting which is on Thursday February 16th at 7pm in Paxford Village Hall, or get in touch with any of the existing councillors for an informal chat (see page x for contact details). The council are particularly keen to hear from residents living in Paxford, Draycott and Aston Magna, all of which are underrepresented at present.