

BPC article for The Voice magazine, September 2022 issue

An introduction to Blockley Parish Council by Clare Turner (Chair) & Jon Bryan (vice-chair)

The parish clerk is the lynchpin that enables the council to deliver all its work and councillors were sad to lose our clerk of three years, Sarah Longbottom, to new ventures in June of this year. Sarah did a fantastic job and is greatly missed but I'm delighted that Nikki Holt has now taken on the role and is settling in brilliantly. The contact details remain the same, so please do message [parishclerk@blockley.org.uk](mailto:parishclerk@blockley.org.uk) if you want to flag up an issue or make a suggestion for the parish.

We also welcomed a new maintenance officer in August, Steve, who takes over from Ray Mayo. Ray has been a valuable member of the team for many years, cutting the grass, distributing notices around the Parish and generally helping out with much of the "behind the scenes" maintenance work needed to keep the parish pristine.

We also said farewell to two councillors in recent months. Ben Cowles spent three years on the council, most recently as lead councillor for both finance and planning, and really helped streamline many processes and systems in this area. Jenny Lidsey served a great many more years on the council and will be known to many of you as a regular contributor to various community groups and activities in addition to her work as a councillor.

The hard work and efforts of both councillors and staff is much appreciated and I'd like to take the opportunity to thank Jenny, Ben, Sarah and Ray for their contributions to our community.

Because of these changes, we no longer have serving councillors that live in either Draycott or Paxford, and we'd really like to change this! In fact, at the time of writing, only six out of the eleven Blockley Parish Council (BPC) seats are filled and we would love to co-opt additional councillors, particularly from the underrepresented villages of Draycott, Aston Magna and Paxford.

Parish Councils are the first tier of local government and are responsible for representing the parish community, delivering some local services and improving community cohesion, wellbeing and quality of life. Full council meets on the third Thursday of each month (except in August and December) and it can be a rewarding role if you are interested in positive change for the community or using your skills to benefit our local area. Please do join us at a meeting to find out more, or get in touch with the current chair, Clare Turner, at [clare.turner@blockley.org.uk](mailto:clare.turner@blockley.org.uk) or call 07740 655 940 for an informal chat.

An important part of our job is to work with the other tiers of local government; Cotswold District Council (responsible for services including planning and waste collections) and Gloucestershire County Council (responsible for highways, libraries, education etc.). This year we successfully applied for a £500 "Build Back Better" grant from Gloucestershire County Council to fund exercise classes for the over sixties and supported the WI with their successful application to fund Jubilee celebrations. We've also worked with representatives from Gloucestershire County Council to get various highways matters addressed (clearing overgrown verges and replacing handrails on pavements for example). Please do get in touch if you know of something that needs tackling in the parish; we are collating a list of local issues, to address as and when County resources are available.

We also try to fill gaps in provision and fund activities that support inclusivity and well-being. We fund a youth club for children 8 years and up, which meets every Thursday evening during term time at Blockley Sports and Social Club for example. Over the summer period, we heavily subsidised day-long sport camps to provide fun, active days for children and support working families that struggle with childcare over the long summer holidays. We also fully funded (free-to attend) fortnightly

sessions run by Blockley Toddler Group for families with children of all ages to enjoy. These sessions provide a no-cost option to get out of the house and connect with other families and have been well attended. Thank you to the volunteers who ran the sessions and made everyone feel so welcome.

BPC is also responsible for parks in Paxford, Draycott, Aston Magna, and Blockley and all of these have been the recipients of new play equipment in recent years. We are currently exploring the possibility of additional provision in Draycott, for older children, in conjunction with the Draycott Village Recreational Trust too.

We have invested in seating in these parks and in many other areas of the Parish too, for all to enjoy these valuable green spaces. You may also have noticed some lovely new noticeboards popping up, as part of a programme to repair or replace these important information points. Check the noticeboards for all the latest from the Parish Council (or visit the website [blockley.org.uk](http://blockley.org.uk), or our facebook page if you prefer a digital communication channel)!

Copies of approved minutes and agendas for upcoming meetings are available on the website and noticeboards and we warmly encourage parishioners to join our monthly meetings to observe or get involved. Venues rotate around the various halls in the Parish, so double check the boards and website for the latest. At the time of writing the next scheduled meetings are as follows:

- Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September at Little Village Hall (Blockley)
- Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October at Jubilee hall (Blockley)
- Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November at Paxord Village Hall

You can also catch Clare Turner and Jon Bryan (Chair and Vice-Chair) at the Blockley Forum event on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November at Blockley Church, starting at 13:15. We will be talking about the past year, and the challenges for the year ahead, and will be taking questions from the audience.

If you have a topic you'd like to raise before November, please do reach out to us at [clare.turner@blockley.org.uk](mailto:clare.turner@blockley.org.uk) or [jon.bryan@blockley.org.uk](mailto:jon.bryan@blockley.org.uk) in the meantime.