

Burton Overy Parish Council

Annual Chairperson's Report for the Period: May 2021 – April 2022

Current Councillors:

Chair: Cllr Bob Warwick
Vice Chair: Cllr Sarah Rankine
Cllr Dave Fletcher
Cllr Nina Garner
Cllr Bob Pain

Clerk to the Council:

Phil Woodward

The last twelve months has seen the Covid pandemic overtaken in the headlines by new pressing issues including the war in Ukraine and inflationary pressures. At least for the Parish Council, there has been a welcome return to normality with its traditional face-to-face meetings resuming 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 thirteen parish council meetings were held in the reporting period, namely one per month with an additional (extra-ordinary) meeting in August. In total the council reviewed 21 planning applications including 12 full planning applications and 6 applications concerning trees in the conservation area. Three of the full planning applications generated significant interest within the village. The first application, involving the rebuilding of a property in Scotland Lane, drew 7 members of the public to the relevant council meeting. This application was eventually withdrawn by the applicants. The second, relating to a development on Carlton Lane, generated such concern that 26 members of the public attended the council meeting which considered the application. In the event, this application was refused by the planning authority, namely Harborough District Council (HDC). The third application, which involved the splitting of an existing dwelling in Town Street into three smaller units, was approved by HDC after due consideration by its full planning committee. 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. It is also worth remarking that the Burton Overy Neighbourhood Plan which was made in 2019, under the auspices of the parish council, is a crucial document when considering planning applications of importance to the environs of the village.

As reported last year, following significant earlier 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, namely the parish council component of the council tax collected by HDC, this has necessarily required an increase in the precept request both for 21/22 and 22/23. The latter has now been implemented (as evident from your recent council tax demand!). We are very grateful to the village for supporting the council in this way.

In October 2021, the parish council established two new WhatsApp Groups as replacements for those first set up to support the community during the early phases of the Covid crisis. The first of the new groups is the **Village Forum**, which provides a channel for the discussion and highlighting of topics of interest to village residents and also a route for seeking help or advice as and when required. The second new group is the **Burton Overy Noticeboard**, which is used by the parish council for the occasional dissemination of information relating to matters of local interest or concern. The latter is not a true chat group but more an information channel in that the parish clerk is the only person able to post messages as the designated "Admin". These new WhatsApp Groups continue to prove very useful and popular with currently 101 participants in the Village Forum and 86 participants in the Burton Overy Noticeboard group.

The Parish Council has joined forces with a registered charity called SADS (Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndromes) to provide a second public access defibrillator for the village. The second defibrillator is now in place on the outside wall of the Bell to the right of the entrance porch, where it is stored in an unlocked yellow cabinet. The cost of supplying and fitting the new defibrillator has been met by donations from village residents (via a dedicated *JustGiving* page), a grant from SADS and a contribution from the Village Hall Committee.

In November 2021 we hosted a short training course in the village hall on how to provide immediate help to someone suffering from cardiac arrest, including the use of a defibrillator. Following the success of this endeavour we hope to rerun this course in 2022.

If you have walked along Back Lane, you cannot fail to have noticed the four blue hearts staked into the grass verges near the junction with Main Street. The blue hearts mark out Burton Overy's first official wildflower area. By agreement, the County Council does not cut back these verges so as to encourage native flower species. A team of local volunteers has been formed to help with maintenance, cutting, raking and, of course, the exciting bit, sowing and planting. We look forward seeing the development of these verges as wildflower havens in future months and years. On a related theme, you may have noticed the three planters which have appeared at the foot of the village signs on the three approaches to the village (Mayns Lane, Washbrook Lane and Carlton Lane). These were funded in large part by a grant awarded by HDC. The planters will be tended by local volunteers who will plant them up with seasonal flowers and greenery and then maintain them as attractive features at the entrances to the village.

The parish council circulated a newsletter in March 2022 together with an updated version of the Burton Overy Village Directory. Hopefully the latter will prove useful for both newcomers to the village and residents of longstanding.

In July 2021 Kate Goddard resigned her position as the parish councillor. We thank her for all her hard work in support of the village community and wish her well for the future. To fill the vacancy, Nina Garner was co-opted as a councillor in September 2021.

Cllr Bob Warwick
May 2022