

Ashendon Parish Council – 2019-2022!

It is three years since we had our last village meeting in April 2019, and in that time individuals, communities and organisations have faced unprecedented challenges.

The Parish Council continued throughout the pandemic. Zoom enabled us to meet and to attend a variety of meetings to stay focussed on projects and actions.

This report is a whistlestop tour of our main achievements over the past 3 years.

Our Remit

We have a range of responsibilities including reviewing planning applications, maintaining verges and open space (Boughton's Peace), war memorial, street lighting, bus shelter, the car park, and to generally represent the interests of residents.

The Community Led Plan has been a key reference document for Parish Council since 2011 and in early 2020 we ran a short survey to check our data to confirm that Parish Council can lead, support or represent the following identified priorities: road maintenance, pedestrian safety, reduction in speed of traffic, reduction of HGV's, village maintenance, Parish Council Communication and Police Presence.

Since 2019 the following actions have supported these priorities:

Road Maintenance

We are not responsible for the maintenance of roads but do our best to influence and inform Buckinghamshire council. We liaise with county councillors and attend meetings with Transport for Bucks to keep Ashendon on the radar.

It is acknowledged that the roads in and around Ashendon are in a poor state and we will continue to lobby for repairs and improvement. New annual budgets are due to be released and I hope there will be some available to repair roads near us.

To report issues please use the fix my street website - <https://www.fixmystreet.buckscc.gov.uk/> this is the best way to get action.

Pedestrian Safety

Improvements to the footway along the Causeway, adding kerbing and a tarmac surface now provide a safe, protected, clean route for pedestrians.

Next, we plan to extend the path into Wotton Road to White City. Thames Water own the verges around the reservoir so we are awaiting their permission to run the path over this land.

Reduction in Speed of Traffic

We are addressing the issue of speeding traffic through the village in two ways.

SID

You may have noticed some silver posts have been installed. This was done by TfB and will soon be sporting our Speed Indication Device (SID). The SID is of high specification and will advise drivers of their speed, offer informative messages and capture relevant data on driving speeds.

This provides us with a speed advisory that drivers will react to. It will also capture valuable information on actual speeds that will help us in consideration of traffic calming measures and applications for funding as required. The SID has been funded through a grant award from Haddenham and Waddesdon Community Board.

Community Speed Watch

The police will no longer carry out speed checks in villages. Instead communities can set up their own speed checks using approved equipment. Data captured will be downloaded to Thames Valley Police who will follow up with vehicle owners when a speeding offence has been indicated. This provides a speeding deterrent, and appropriate action for offenders. Ashendon has signed up for this and we started the process to recruit volunteers to operate the camera. All volunteers must complete a short, on-line, training course covering fundamentals such as health & safety and rules/requirements for operation and data reporting.

Richard Phillips has kindly volunteered to lead the management of both SID and Speed Watch.

We need more volunteers to help with both initiatives. To date the response to appeals for Speed Watch volunteers has been disappointing and just 2 people have completed the training for Speed Watch.

The equipment funding/source for Speed Watch has yet to be identified. We will not pursue this further until we have commitment from Ashendon residents.

Reduction in HGV's

Peter Smettem represented us in a joint parish action group that successfully influenced the local freight strategy, defining routes that HGV's must take. Ashendon is not on these routes.

Peter also succeeded in getting the transport manager at Greatmoor to sanction any HGV reported to have used Ashendon as a cut through.

Review of a recent planning application by Bucks Recycling identified a recommendation to remove an existing planning restriction for Ashendon road (unless delivering to the village). We objected and, with the support of our county councillors, this recommendation was not successful and the restriction remains in place.

Village Maintenance

We continue to look after the cutting of grass verges/grass in Ashendon and Upper Pollicott, Boughton's Peace and Playing Fields. From 2022 responsibility for playing fields grass cutting has been handed back to APFA to enable them to better service the requirements of Ludgersall football club.

We contracted external providers to cut back the laurel hedge on the verge opposite the old Post Office at Lower End, and to crown lift 2 large trees on Boughton's Peace.

Parish councillors and residents have voluntarily completed work on our behalf including clearing intrusive elder on Boughton's Peace (thanks Chris and Les) and repairing the bus shelter when it was damaged by a large vehicle (thanks to Kevin Nash and Richard Bates).

As PC chair, Kevin Nash championed Litter Picking with successful sessions held in May 2019 and April 2020. Due to Covid, residents were asked to 'DIY' using equipment available from Kevin. Unfortunately, the take up was poor (zero!). We will aim to reinstate the more social/popular village litter pick from next April.

During 2021, a team of village volunteers (thank you all) walked the footpaths and bridleways in our parish and reported the state of these to Andy Howes to share with landowners. Actions have been taken to address issues reported. There is further work to be done to improve and we are looking at options. We urge all residents to report any issues to Parish Council.

Parish Council Communication

We have a really good website and encourage all residents to use this as a point of reference and to register for news updates. We also communicate important information via social media, Bernwode News, email and door to door flyers. If we can improve on our communications please let us have your suggestions.

Police Presence

Our local police are very supportive and have responded to our request for their presence to be apparent following some issues in the playing fields and car park.

I also received an email following a patrol completed on the playing fields by our local PCSO Danny Fahy outlining some issues he had identified and recommendations. These were actioned.

Local Council Organisation

Following the 2020 change to a unitary Buckinghamshire Council, Ashendon joined the Haddenham and Waddesdon Community Board and we are represented by 3 councillors: Mick Caffery, Paul Irwin, Ashley Waite. The board represents our interests at council level and has funding to support local parish projects.

Following elections in May 2021, the newly formed Parish Council said a fond farewell to long-standing Parish Councillors (Kevin Nash and Peter Smettem) and we welcomed 2 new Parish Councillors (Fiona Jacob and Mark Wakeling). I was subsequently voted to be Chair and would like to thank the new Parish Council and Parishioners for their support as I find my feet.

Alongside other priorities, the wellbeing of residents and environmental issues have been part of our agenda. Here are some examples of our recent activities and achievements.

Wellbeing and the Environment

Takeaways to break the monotony!

Together with the Village Support Group, over a period of weeks during lockdown, we distributed take away meals to our elderly residents, funded by our local community board, prepared by The Lion in Waddesdon and distributed by the Bernie Bus team.

Bernies Book Box

At the Playing Field Pavilion is a cabinet containing a 'little library' of books for all ages for everyone in our community to enjoy. This has been well received. Recently the volunteers who

refreshed the books monthly have had to stop and a local resident (thank you Miriam) has offered to take the role on. We will liaise with, and support her.

Our local pub

3 years ago, we reported that the application to register our local pub as a community asset had been declined. In response to requests from local residents we considered whether Parish Council should reapply to register the Hundred of Ashendon as a community asset, based on its importance to the village wellbeing. The decision was made that Parish Council would not proceed but that this would not stop anyone in the community who wished to apply. To our knowledge no-one has picked this up.

Defibrillator for Pollicott

We were awarded a grant of £2,332 for a defibrillator in Pollicott. Richard and Vanessa Bates kindly allowed us to run the power from their property and the defibrillator will be installed next to the post box in the next few days. A training session will be run by the grant awarding charity.

Boughton's Peace Wildlife Project

As part of the Wild Aylesbury Vale initiative, we were awarded a grant of £463 to 'showcase' some wildlife features on Boughton's Peace. The WI planted shrubs to attract butterflies and bees. Bird boxes, bug accommodation, a composter, a small water feature, and crab apple trees were installed/planted during a well-attended working party. A unit is under construction for excess plants/produce to be shared. Further details are available on the Parish Council website.

Community Allotment

We have taken on a large allotment on the playing fields to become a community allotment. It is intended that anyone in our community who would like to get involved will be able to do so, and judging by the response to an appeal for organic matter to fill trenches we hope this will be a successful venture. Thanks to Mark Wakeling for leading this initiative.

Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Members of the Parish Council are involved in the planning for forthcoming celebrations.

Play around the Parishes

Ashendon hosted this well attended event in August 2021. Following feedback it has been agreed to change the format to run a village play day in Ashendon in 2022 funded by PC.

I thank all our councillors, and our hard-working clerk Venetia, for their commitment to, and support of, our Parish throughout what has been an extremely challenging time.