

Great Burstead and South Green Village Council - Annual Report 2011/2012

Our village is surrounded by beautiful countryside but our village has more than that; it has an active community which the Village Council fully supports. We represent 8,000 residents which includes 4,700 electorate and 2,700 households.

The Village Council supports local voluntary organisations whose members work hard to provide opportunities for residents to enjoy themselves and their surroundings. For example, the Village Council recently provided a grant to South Green Memorial Hall to improve facilities for the disabled. The hall is used extensively by the local community and run by a management committee of volunteers.

We are holding in our reserves a grant towards the refurbishment of Langham Hall which has fallen into disrepair. A dedicated group of volunteers, including one of our councillors, are organising its renovation for use by the whole community to provide a venue for health, recreation, education and community activity.

Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee celebrations gave the Village Council a further opportunity to support the community by funding a lunch for the Thursday Club, a club for senior citizens run by volunteers. The lunch was held in June and was a great success.

As part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations the Village Council delivered a coin to every household in our parish commemorating Her Majesty's sixty years of service. The Village Council decided it would be a fitting memento for that historic occasion. Many residents have expressed their appreciation.

The Village Council continues to work closely with Essex County Council. For example, after consultation with local residents and the assistance Essex County Council, two timber bus stops were installed in the conservation area in Church Street.

Essex County Council provided fifty bags of salt for use during winter on key areas in the village, such as the shopping parade car park and outside the GP surgery. The Village Council organised the distribution to residents and retailers who volunteered to take a bag. Thanks are due to Pat from the greengrocers who collected and delivered the retailers' salt. One resident cleared two bus stops near his home of snow before putting the salt down.

We also work closely with Basildon Borough Council. For example, the Village Council endorses Basildon Borough Council's Core Strategy Development Plan which includes a recommendation that the green belt should be protected. The Village Council considers all planning applications within the parish and will continue to preserve the green belt and ensure that applications are in keeping for the parish.

Through the Living Landscapes initiatives, currently ongoing in the village, the Village Council is supporting, in principal, part funding a project to reinstate a hedgerow on the grass verge at Noak Hill Road. This will provide a much needed habitat for wildlife and create a gateway for a wildlife corridor. Living landscapes is run by a committed band of volunteers.

Yet again, prudent management of our finances has ensured that the local tax residents pay to the Village Council - known as the precept - has not increased in four years. Our precept is the lowest of all the local Basildon councils.

Two ongoing projects are the Christmas lights, which will shine again this year with a lively new LED display, and the hanging baskets at the shops which are looking splendid with appropriate red, white and blue flowers. We are also funding bedding plants at the bell bollards in the shopping parade car park. These projects help to brighten our community.

Many residents are concerned about litter. With the assistance of Basildon Borough Council we are arranging for a bin to be installed beside the youth shelter on the green. The Village Council will consider taking part in Love Where you Live, an Essex County Council initiative encouraging local communities to manage litter. So if you are concerned about litter perhaps you would like to join us if we arrange a litter pick.

We are fortunate that the Burstead Police team, through the Neighbourhood Action Panel, provide a forum to share crime concerns. The Police also periodically attend Village Council meetings to report on local crime.

We communicate through our notice board, website, newsletter and meetings which are open to the public. We are fortunate that residents take the time to come to our meetings and share their concerns and recommendations.

At the May elections six councillors were elected, two of whom were new to the council. We currently have two vacancies and we will be considering co-opting two councillors immediately after this meeting to fill these. Councillors give of their time and energy freely to the community and our thanks are due to them.

Lastly, we thank our Clerk, Martin Ainscough, who joined us in October 2011. He has a wealth of local government experience having worked both at Borough and County Council level. Although Martin has been with the council a relatively short time he has made a positive impact. Should any of you ever have any queries or want to know more about the council please contact our Clerk.

Chair – Marie Dear

