

# Baughurst Parish Council

## Chairman's Chatter – March 2023

Chairman of the Council, Martin Slafford, focuses attention on the activities of the Parish Council in this edition of Chairman's Chatter for March 2023.

We welcome recent councillors Natalie Fletcher, Maria Higson, Russ Clarke, Mark Charlton, Richard Cockle and Colin Cooper who have brought new ideas and energy to improve our communities, and we thank outgoing councillors Alex Sciarretta, Peter Markwick, Liz Page and Philip Postance for their years of service to the community.

We have one councillor vacancy. If you would like to help us to maintain and improve our community, please contact the Clerk. You can use the QR code here to automatically load the email address.

What can the Parish Council do? It is often difficult to know whether local services are provided by Council tax paid to Hampshire, Basingstoke or Baughurst. Here are some of the things which Baughurst Parish Council deliver. If you need advice please contact Penny Waterfield, who is our Clerk.



### Open spaces

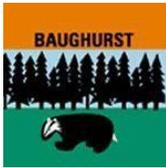
We own and manage over 14 acres of open spaces, playgrounds and playing fields.

We will be clearing some of the undergrowth on these areas to reveal the beauty and allow easier access.

We cut back some of the laurel jungle opposite the Hurst Leisure Centre last autumn. This is the start of a plan to open up the path through the land we own beside Brimpton Road. We want to make the footpaths safer and easier for all to use and enjoy. We may clear more of the laurel so that we can all see what we should plant to replace the laurel. Laurel grows very fast and is expensive to maintain it to a sensible size so, although it may look drastic at first, the new vision will soon grow. If you have ideas on how this project should develop, please email the clerk.

### Trees

We own over 1,000 large trees. These are regularly surveyed and any that are dangerous are felled. Many of our trees are getting to the end of their lifespan and more will need felling in future. Our policy is to replace trees. If you would like to have a memorial tree planted, please let us know.



# Baughurst Parish Council

## **Benches**

There are many benches around the parish to provide rest whilst enjoying our villages. A new bench is due to be installed at the junction of Portway and Woodlands Road. This has been donated by Councillor Stuart Frost with money from Basingstoke Council. If you have ideas of places where it would be good to have a bench or would like to have a memorial bench to people you knew, please contact the Clerk.

## **War memorial**

Baughurst maintain the War Memorial which is a listed building of national importance. Following public consultation and the drawings in our last newsletter, we are opening up the area around the War Memorial to make it stand out better. We will be adding new plants and flowers to create a beautiful, quiet sanctuary for reflection around the memorial.

## **Footpaths**

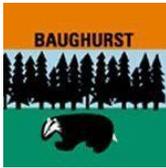
We own most of the paths in Baughurst Common including 800 metres of tarmac paths (not the pavements, these are owned by Hampshire County Council). We also help make our country footpaths clear in association with the landowners. Most stiles have been replaced by kissing gates as a Baughurst project to make access easier. A selection of footpath walks has been published by the Parish and will soon be available on our website. Baughurst were pleased to work with the Hampshire County Council rights of way team and Ashford Hill Parish Council to support the voluntary work improving footpaths and the long-distance Brenda Parker Way through Great Haughurst Copse in Axmansford. Anne Ayres, who is leading this conservation project, will be telling us about it at our meeting on April 20th.

## **Litter picking**

We are all proud of our surroundings, but there are still a few thoughtless people who leave litter. In Baughurst Common, the Parish manage a weekly litter pick to supplement the work by Basingstoke Council. In the more rural parts of the parish several volunteers have kept our verges and footpaths clear of litter. We are very grateful for their contribution to Beautiful Baughurst. Please let me know of anyone who should receive a certificate of appreciation.

## **Pineapple Field**

The parish owns and manages this sports field which lies adjacent to the previously named 'Pineapple Inn' on Ashford Hill Road. Last summer we invested in upgrading the facilities.



# Baughurst Parish Council

## Playgrounds

There are two playgrounds owned and maintained by the Parish - these are at Long Grove and at Wolverton, beside the Old Hare and Hounds. Both are inspected each week and quarterly professional reports on safety are carried out.

The rubber safety surfacing has had a makeover at Long Grove – with some work still to complete - and the bark chippings safety surface is being replaced at Wolverton Common. Whilst the shade of the pine trees at Long Grove is attractive it does mean that the play equipment, picnic table and the new benches get covered in green algae. We arrange jet washing of the equipment.

With professional services from a local engineering company, we have recently replaced the automatic gate closers at Wolverton. If you see anything wrong at either park, please call us on 07746 756007 or email the Clerk.

## Speeding

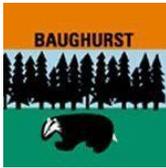
Concerns about excess speed are the most common concerns that we all have. Speed management is the responsibility of Hampshire and the Police. Baughurst have taken the lead on providing the police with evidence of excess speed. Over 10 years ago we were one of the first councils in Hampshire to buy a speed indicating device and operate a Community Speed Watch group. You will see this speed limit reminder at several locations including Wolverton Road and Baughurst Road.

We have now bought a speed camera which monitors traffic and records excess speed evidence. The worst time for speed on the Baughurst Road is when children are travelling to and from school. We regularly record cars exceeding 60 mph in a 30 limit. In Wolverton, the evidence from Community Speed Watch and our camera resulted in the police camera van paying us a visit. One local person was recorded at over 60 mph in the 30 limit and, according to the Basingstoke Gazette, almost lost his license and was fined hundreds of pounds.

If each one of us were to concentrate on not exceeding the speed limit within Baughurst it will slow many others travelling through our community. The cure is with us rather than through police punishment.

## Affordable Housing

The Parish have recognised the need for affordable houses to rent and has been looking for suitable sites for over a dozen years. These schemes reduce the cost of building and can deliver genuinely affordable houses to rent. Last



# Baughurst Parish Council

year Basingstoke Council reported that they had over 40 local families on their housing register for Baughurst needing an affordable house to rent.

If you have a site near other houses and would be prepared to offer it at agricultural prices please contact Penny Waterfield.

## Bus shelters

We own and manage eight bus shelters. These are located between Brimpton Road by the Hurst, along Woodlands Road and Heath End Road and on the A339 by Wolverton Pond and Pitt Hall Farm.

The plastic-sided ones were recently refurbished by a national company based in Thatcham. Some of the stickers have proved impossible to remove. Would you like us to spend our Council tax on replacing the clear panels? Please talk to any of your councillors. The contact details are in the QR code attached.



The Parish Council also assists in other activities around the parish. Two examples that are current are:

## King Charles III coronation events

Baughurst Parish Council will bring together everyone who is planning events to celebrate the Coronation. Wolverton Hall are having a village tea party on Sunday 7th May. Details from Frances Langley on 01635 297125. Heath End Hall are planning to broadcast the Coventry on Sunday 7th May in the evening with a Hog Roast. Tickets from heathendhall@gmail.com.

## Sustainability

Several people in our community are concerned about the cost of energy and the impact of Climate Change. With support from Councillors, a group has been formed to deliver improvements to benefit us all. Our Annual Parish meeting on April 20th will have reports and presentations on sustainability topics. We hope that you and your friends can join us for this meeting that reports on what the Parish Council has done and to receive your suggestions on issues to address in the next year. For more information on Sustainability please contact Councillor Russ Clark.