

New name, new look

According to our recent Parish Plan questionnaire findings, less than half of local households know how to give their views to Burton Latimer Town Council (BLTC), contact a Councillor or find out what happened at a Council meeting – which is a sad state of affairs.

But until recently, I would have been in that group too – despite having lived in the town for over 20 years. The Council just didn't register on my radar.

However, since creating the town's website and helping to steer the Parish Plan project, I have become more aware of the work local Councillors do on our behalf – most of it behind the scenes.

And that's where the Council's vision for its re-vamped quarterly newsletter comes in. Several people said in their questionnaire responses that the old publication, *Sounding Board*, could do more to explain BLTC's role, activities and decisions more effectively.

It could also help to make our Councillors more 'visible' within the community, inform local residents of decisions and actions taken or planned by BLTC, and – most important – seek feedback on specific topics of interest.

Well, that's the plan for the new title: *Burton Latimer News*. I've volunteered to edit this and future editions, so please let me know (see back page for contact details) if you think I'm getting it right – or wrong!

Warwick Hunt
Independent editor
November 2011

Parish Plan household questionnaire: analysis report now available



706 of the 3,500 households in Burton Latimer completed a household questionnaire earlier this year, to get our Parish Plan project off to a flying start.

This level of response is a fantastic achievement for a community survey of this type, and in a town of our size.

The steering group has now analysed the questionnaires, and produced a full report – which is available at the Civic Centre and the library in High Street.

Copies can also be downloaded from the town's community website – www.burtonlatimer.org.

In addition, this issue of *Burton Latimer News* includes a short summary of the main findings, and explains what's going to happen next.

To move the project on, a draft version of the Parish Plan will be on show at a public "drop in" session at the Civic Centre between 10am and 1pm on Saturday 3rd December.

This will be a further chance to review and comment on the questionnaire analysis, to suggest changes that you would like to see in Burton Latimer, and to identify what needs to happen to bring these about.

The feedback from this event will then be incorporated into the final Parish Plan document, which is expected to be published in late December or early January.

If you have any comments after reading the questionnaire analysis included with this newsletter, please email them to Fergus Macdonald at:
h.macdonald1@sky.com

Pocket park to get better – and bigger

The team from the Community Payback scheme has been working hard to enhance the Pocket Park and its surrounding area.

In particular, they have widened many of the pathways and cleared a large number of the ditches. A new area around the balancing pond has also been cleared to create an attractive feature.

Thanks to discussions between Persimmon Homes and local Councillors, the developer – who has built houses on adjacent land – has agreed to give the Town Council a large stretch of what was otherwise waste ground, to enable the Pocket Park to be enlarged.



Burton Latimer's Roman heritage

Buyers of the new homes being built off Higham Road won't be the first people to have lived on the site. It seems the Romans got there first!

As a condition of planning permission granted by Kettering Borough Council, David Wilson Homes was required to carry out a thorough archaeological study of the site before work on their housing development could start.

During the summer specialist researchers uncovered a series of rectangular enclosures with an integral trackway, along with an ancient cemetery containing 30 burials. They also unearthed pottery vessels, coins and small metal objects, plus animal bones and charred grain – although any evidence of buildings had been destroyed by centuries of ploughing.

The investigation suggests that the site was a Romano-British settlement between the 2nd and 4th century AD, before being abandoned. The occupants were probably farmers.

The findings from this exciting discovery – which will eventually be deposited with a local museum – add an important new chapter to the history of Burton Latimer.



A boost for Burton Latimer businesses

Local Councillors held an informal cheese and wine evening for small businesses in September.

The aim of the get-together – which was attended by about 50 people – was to find out how local businesses are coping in the current economic climate and to see if there are things that the Town Council could do to help.

One of the ideas discussed was the Council's plan to develop a

directory of local small businesses. This is already being compiled and is expected to be published – both in paper format and online – towards the end of January 2012.

The feedback from the evening was extremely positive.

A further event is planned for February or March 2012, when representatives from the large companies will also be invited.

Highway matters

Road surface repairs

An extensive programme of tarmac "patching" is currently being carried out across the town. Hillcrest Avenue should also be completely resurfaced before the end of the financial year.

Unfortunately, the notoriously poor road surfaces in the Poplar Road area and at the end of Station Road are more difficult to resolve.

The original construction of these roads means that the only solution is to dig them up and completely relay them.

The cost for this is extreme, and Northamptonshire County Council doesn't currently have the money available.

Traffic issues

The Town Council has secured changes to the design of the proposed Cranford Road / A6 roundabout being built by Taylor Wimpey as part of their Cranford Road development, to ensure that it will be fit for purpose.

The Parish Plan household survey earlier this year highlighted a continuing concern about the large number of HGV vehicles passing through the town – especially along High Street.

However, a recent traffic survey carried out by Councillors and volunteers has found that the new signage from the A6 and A14 has reduced this problem significantly.

Pavements and parking

The uneven pavements in High Street are expected to be repaired early in the New Year.

At the same time, new parking regulations in the town centre should be in place. The revised arrangements include:

- Parking outside the Churchill Way shops will be limited to one hour. Disabled parking bays will also be provided.
- Parking in High Street between the Church Street and Churchill Way junctions will be limited to one hour.

Dial 101 to contact the local police

101 is the new nationwide telephone number to dial if you need to make a non-urgent call to the local police.

While 999 is the well-recognised number for emergencies, the 2010 British Crime Survey found that only 54 per cent of people knew how to contact their local police if they want to discuss general policing issues, or to report non-urgent crime or anti-social behaviour.

The new national 101 number provides a single, easy to remember number to contact the local police to report such incidents or to speak to local officers.

Calls to 101 cost 15p, no matter how long you are on the phone – and this applies to both landlines and mobile phones.

In an emergency you should continue to call 999



How can we make sure that local voices are being heard?

A Councillor's personal view

By Roger Knight

Many of the issues raised by local residents in the recent Parish Plan household questionnaire are already on the Town Council's agenda.

But how much power and influence do all three Councils (Town, Borough and County) actually have to carry out the wishes of the electorate?

Housing

For instance, the amount of house-building taking place in the town is a key current concern. Burtonians are worried about the scale, pace and location of recent (and planned) developments and the risks of overwhelming the infrastructure in these times of severely reduced public spending.

At the same time Government is proposing changes to the planning rules, so that sustainable development (whatever that means!) will be viewed favourably by planning authorities – including on the green belt around towns and villages.

With two major housing projects currently underway in Burton Latimer we might think we are already doing our bit to meet the region's housing needs – but we probably shouldn't speak too soon!

Kettering Borough Council, like many other planning authorities, is drawing up a plan showing where development could take place.

However, these plans take months to prepare, and then have to be agreed by a Government Planning Inspector.

But as we know, once a by-pass is built, the pressure to build up to it can be relentless!

Traffic and transport

Traffic and transport is another general concern.

The good news is that our bus services seem to have improved, in that we now have two buses an hour towards Bedford and can get to Kettering railway station and the General Hospital without changing buses or a long walk.

However, the new timetables in July and September were communicated poorly by the bus company, and there is a lack of bus stops in some places.

Speeding and parking challenges remain and – although the recent traffic survey shows a big fall in the number of lorries passing through the town centre – HGV traffic is still a problem to residents along Finedon Road.

So, while it is clear that our Town, Borough and County Councils can – and do – change things for the better, we also need to be aware that national policies, processes and rules don't always allow us to respond to locally-voiced concerns in a way that we would like.

Diary dates

Burton Latimer Town Council meetings

All BLTC meetings start at 7pm

Full Council meetings

- Tuesday 6th December 2011
- Tuesday 3rd January 2012

Finance & General Purposes Committee meetings

- Thursday 15th December 2011
- Thursday 12th January 2012

Planning Committee meetings

- Monday 19th December 2011
- Monday 17th January 2012

Christmas lights switch-on

- Friday 25th November 2011

Parish Plan public open day at the Civic Centre

- Saturday 3rd December 2011

Burton Latimer Summer Ball 2012

- Friday 22nd June 2012 at Harrowden Hall

Civic Centre – rooms available for hire

The Civic Centre's main conference room and the smaller training room are both available for groups to use.

The hourly rates for each room depend on whether those wishing to hire are business, non-profit making or charitable organisations.

Both rooms have the use of adjacent tea making facilities, and are DDA accessible and compliant.

Please contact Derek Zanger on 505240 or Fergus Macdonald on 725922 to make a booking.

Twinning Association news: exchange visits planned for 2012

2012 will be the 10th anniversary of Burton Latimer's twinning with Castelnuovo Magra in Italy and the 25th year since our link-up with Altendiez in Germany.

Visits to both towns are now being planned to mark these

milestones – with one of the trips probably taking place in the late spring and the other in the autumn.

It is also possible that Burton Latimer will host return visits on separate occasions during the year.

The Twinning Association is now

looking for people who are keen to take part in a visit or help with fund-raising events – or who can offer help when the visitors come to Burton Latimer. If this sounds like you, please contact Maureen Jerram on 725524

After the fire at Blackbridge farm

Since September's inferno at Blackbridge Farm waste recycling centre, Burton Latimer's Councillors have been urging the regulatory authorities to ensure that any future operations at the site are carried out safely and in line with the planning permissions that have been granted.

The industrial unit – which is operated by Think Environmental Limited – recycles waste to form bales which are processed to produce energy.

In February 2011 the firm was fined for breaching regulations and has recently been served with three compliance notices by the Environment Agency, plus a planning enforcement notice by the County Council, relating to the storage of waste paper, cardboard and plastic.

A full investigation is underway to identify the cause of the fire, and the Town Council will insist that the findings are acted upon, and that any recommendations to prevent a similar event in the future are fully implemented and complied with.

Christmas Lights switch-on 2011 Festive fun for all the family

Burton Latimer's Christmas lights will be switched on at 7pm on Friday 25th November.

The evening's attractions will include John Scarrott fun fair, various stalls, and singing from both St Mary's and Meadowside school choirs.

Hot drinks and mulled wine will be on offer from the Friends of St Mary's, and the Salvation Army will be singing and playing carols.

As in previous years, there will be a children's free prize draw on the night – with the lucky winner getting the chance to throw the light switch at 7pm.

During the evening you will be



able to browse the shops and stalls, peruse the arts & crafts sale and exhibition, and drop into the Heritage Museum.

Come along and join the fun. It should be a great way to get into the Christmas mood!

How to contact Burton Latimer News

If you wish to comment on anything in this edition of Burton Latimer News, please post or email your views to the following addresses:

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KBC – Ruth Groome, Jan Smith and Derek Zanger represent Burton Latimer on Kettering Borough Council

NCC – Christopher Groome represents Burton Latimer on Northamptonshire County Council