

North Crawley Parish Bulletin - January 2021

Hi Folks, Steve Garner here with your latest Parish Bulletin. In these strange times with Covid restrictions, the Parish Council (PC) continues to meet using Zoom. We are now posting the link on the agenda so anyone (who uses Zoom) can join us without having to register. I'm sure we all look forward to when we can meet in person - hopefully not long now!

We still have a couple of vacancies on the PC and we want to offer 1 or 2 places to people who have very limited time to offer - just a couple of hours a month to attend the meetings - and we promise we won't rope you into any of the other activities and responsibilities we take on! Please give it some thought - we could really do with some of the younger residents view points on the Council.

No news yet regarding the proposed reduction in the Conservation Area that we are opposed to. Hopefully our Ward Councillors supporting our cause will help us keep things as they are.

We are refurbishing the notice board in the Church to hand it over to the school - they could really do with one - and we hope to present it before the end of January.

PCSO Arlene joined us to report that there had been a distraction burglary in Bryan's Crescent - this is where someone keeps you chatting at the door whilst their accomplice pinches things. Still in Bryan's Crescent there have been complaints about inappropriate parking which Arlene is dealing with. She also told us that 4 new PCSOs have been appointed to bring the team up to strength.

The Neighbourhood Plan is still being worked on and we now have the completed report from the consultants we are using. They have some different views to the Steering Group and we are trying to reach some conclusions about which sites we will be able to put to the Community to vote on. We hope to meet with MK Planning before producing a written update which will be posted through every letterbox.

We are still looking for someone to take on the role of Village Warden - we need someone to help us keep the village looking so beautiful by carrying out the numerous jobs "behind the scenes" that are so vital. It's only a couple of hours a week and you'd be paid for your time. Alternatively if there is a business that could take this on we'd love to hear from you. Just let any of your Councillors or the Clerk know of your interest and we'll take it from there.

The Village Shop is 100 years old in February! We are really keen to mark the occasion and will be purchasing a plaque to be fixed to the wall by the entrance. Due to the Covid restrictions, we cannot have a gathering there at the moment but we plan to have a proper celebration event later in the year and we are keeping in touch with Pardeep about this.

You may have seen or even experienced the local flooding we had recently. Part of this was due to blocked drainage ditches and we are producing a report to identify where the problems were and how MK Council can help ensure the ditches are cleared.

The PC's website is getting more and more information on it - check it out at www.northcrawley-pc.gov.uk. If you're involved with any sort of village activity, it acts as a great platform to publicise what you're up to. Send any ideas to suegarner@northcrawley-pc.gov.uk.

The refurbished wooden multiplay in the play park looks fantastic in its bright colours and brand new wood! Thank you to the wonderful volunteers who did the work! We also have a smart new entrance gate to replace the rotten one and there are more plans being developed to improve the play park further. At this time of year the grass surface gets very muddy and a proper new surface is one of the goals of the Play Park Committee in due course. They are busy applying for Grants as well as fund raising locally. Also the Book Swap Club should be up and running in March - watch this space for more developments!

We have finalised the budget for next year (starts April) and we have added a couple of "extras" that have increased the precept a little. The main increases are to pay for the Village Warden, to offer more of the excellent outdoor play sessions for youngsters during the year and to hold a couple of village "events", including one specifically for our older residents, assuming life can get back to "normal" later this year! Village events were high on the list of suggestions in the village survey and the only one of the top 5 we were not already working on.

Well, that's it for another month - so it's time to hand over to Sheila Bushnell, our Parish Clerk, to tell you more about her role. In my short time in the Chair I have learnt just how much Sheila does and what an asset she is to our community - thank you Sheila!!

I am Sheila Bushnell and I have been asked to introduce myself to you. I am not a parish councillor but am the Clerk to the Council and, as such, am a paid employee. As North Crawley is a small parish, being Clerk is very much a part time job and I am paid for working around 10 hours per week on average during the year.

Legally every Parish Council has to employ a person, or people in the case of a larger council, to carry out the duties of a Clerk (the Proper Officer) and also a Responsible Finance Officer. The duties that I have include: managing the financial transactions and budget; organising the meetings of the council and taking the minutes and doing the action needed after each meeting; dealing with emails and other correspondence received from Milton Keynes Council, residents and many others; managing the cemetery; advising the councillors on legal aspects, best practice, etc.; preparing and submitting all the finance and other returns that are legally required to be made.

I have had two stints of being Clerk. The first was in the 1980s (showing my age here!) when Peter Jeffrey, who some of you will remember, knocked on my door one day to say that "someone" had suggested that I might be a suitable person to become the Clerk. To this day, I have never found out who that "someone" was but it led to my becoming Clerk at that time and then being persuaded to become involved again around six years ago.

I very much believe in Parish Councils and the way they give a voice to local people. Milton Keynes is unique in the country because it is "fully parished" with some 48 councils covering the whole area. You will know that I have often put out notices in Scan, through people's doors, on Facebook, etc. to try to encourage people to come forward to be parish councillors. I can almost hear people saying "here she goes again" each time! However, I feel that it is very important indeed that the residents of North Crawley realise the importance of having a local voice in these challenging times and consider putting themselves forward to become councillors. They will then have the opportunity to shape the type of parish council that they would like to see. It is not too onerous, is very interesting and can actually be fun!

Oh and by the way, we currently have a vacancy