

The Annual Parish Meeting for Blisworth was held on 13th May 2024 at 6:30 pm at the Village Hall.

The Annual Parish Meeting is open to all electors of Blisworth Parish, who have the right not only to attend but also to speak on any matter of local interest.

This meeting has its own minutes, which should be kept separately from the Parish Council minutes.

Present: Cllr S Billing, Chair
Cllr C Read MBE, Vice-Chair
Cllr D Wilson
Cllr W Root
Cllr B Brown
Cllr M Field
Cllr J Hawkins
Cllr B Ingram
Cllr N Chandler

Also present: Clerk: Angela Billing
30 Members of public

The Chair of Blisworth Parish Council, Councillor Billing took the Chair for the meeting.

Cllr Billing welcomed all to the meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting of 22nd May 2023 were approved.

Chairman's report:

The Chair thanked all the groups/organisations in the parish and also our District Councillor Karen Cooper that submitted reports about their groups/organisations. The Chair stated that all the reports were displayed around the hall for residents to read and would be included in the Appendices of these minutes.

Cllr Ingram and Cllr Karen Cooper were welcomed as parish councillors this year and they have been great assets. Unfortunately, Cllr Karen Cooper had to step down due to family commitments, we are already missing her enthusiasm and hard work but she is still our District Council and is always eager to follow up on residents' concerns.

In quick summary:

- Blisworth Parish Council has worked with the Community Payback Services to clear the vacant plots and overgrown areas at the allotments and to clear areas in the Closed Cemetery.
Our clerk continues to work with the volunteers at the Closed Cemetery (they're called the Graveyard Shift) to clear areas to allow other wildflower species to grow. The Council managed to obtain over 100 plus plants which the volunteers are planning to plant soon.

- Blisworth Parish Council purchased solar panels for two of the VAS machines in the village (this will save costs on replacing batteries)
- Blisworth Parish Council obtained a grant from Gigaclear for the Blisworth Baptist Church towards set up fees for a Youth Parish Council to voice the needs of our younger residents.
- We have carried out important maintenance on some of the older pieces of equipment in Eastfield play area.

Network Rail and the embankment stabilising:

After much persistent correspondence from the Council, Network Rail originally agreed to monitor all traffic from their site to that the village would not be used as an access route to their worksite on Northampton Road and up until the beginning of January 2024, the vast majority of the trucks were not going through the village.

But that has changed and we have seen evidence and been notified by residents that the trucks are now using the village as their route to and from the site on Northampton Road.

Blisworth Parish Council invited Network Rail to attend the Annual Parish meeting to address residents' concerns, however they rejected our invitation. They have now officially stated that they will have to use the village as an access route. Councillors have already set up traffic surveys to get evidence that these trucks are actually going through the village to access the site but possibly due to complaints and numerous phone calls from the clerk they recently stopped going through the village. However, there is no assurance from Network Rail that they will stop using the village roads as their main access route. The Parish Council will reschedule another survey as soon as they start using the village again. Please let the clerk know if you see any trucks heading towards the Northampton Road laden with materials. The Council will pursue this further but we need evidence and that includes:

- Dates and times
- Registration number
- Company logo
- Photos
- Videos of vehicles going over the kerbs

If we don't get this information, we cannot pursue them.

Cllr Read asked residents to send any photos/videos to the clerk and not to share it on any social media platforms, otherwise the Police will not be able to use the images.

Blisworth Parish Council has worked hard to get value for money through the year as we know that there are many demands for funds to tackle the traffic issues in the village. This was the main focus for residents at the last Annual Parish meeting (2023). We have engaged in close to 100 contacts (including telephone calls, emails, and multiple meetings) with all the stakeholders involved in traffic at WNC and Highways and also with the police. The Chair thanked Cllr Brown and the Traffic Working Group who have worked amazingly hard to persuade WNC to make progress. The Chair asked Cllr Brown to share the Traffic and Highways report.

Traffic and Highways report: Update from Cllr Brown At the Annual Parish Meeting last year, we asked everyone to identify the most urgent issues for the village. The message was clear: traffic, potholes and pavements. And Blisworth Parish Council has therefore

concentrated on trying to make progress on all three. This is not easy because the Parish Council has no statutory responsibilities or powers over pavements, roads or traffic: responsibility lies with West Northants Council, their contractors and with Highways. As a Council we can only seek to influence and persuade. But we have done this and we have made some progress:

Potholes and Pavements: As across the country, we suffer from pavements and roads in a poor state of repair. And as soon as one area is repaired, another pothole or the like appears. But residents will, we hope, have seen the repairs that have been made in the village – on the High Street, Stoke Road, Eastfield, Windmill Avenue. We also have a commitment that Courteenhall Road will be repaired in the next month or so, and that Stoke Road will be repaired once the current works above the canal are concluded. The bridleway between Connegar Leys and Courteenhall Road has also been repaired at each end, and the middle section (which is a more complicated drainage need) will be addressed over the summer.

One area of particular concern has been the corner of Stoke Road and the High Street where the narrow sloping pavement has already seen a number of accidents. We have spoken with WNC engineers about this stretch three times, but unfortunately the consistent response has been that it is simply not possible to make this section safe due to a combination of no foundations, narrowness and slope. So, instead, we demanded that work to be done to improve the quality of the pavement on the opposite side. This has been done. It is not an ideal solution, but at least we have one safe pavement for residents – particularly those with mobility issues – to use.

Dropped Kerbs: Bids have gone in for four new sets of dropped kerbs – two in Chapel Lane, one in Little Lane and one in Courteenhall Road. We are waiting to hear if the bids have been successful.

Traffic Calming: As we have reported in previous editions, WNC will not approve any traffic calming measures that involve a vertical build – so no sleeping policemen, speed bumps or speed pads. This is WNC policy. So as a Parish Council, we have pursued other traffic calming improvements. The following are now planned:

1. A 20mph zone in the middle of the village. A map showing the proposed area is available on [parish website]. We have gone back already to WNC to ask that the zone covers the full length of the High Street, Gayton Road as far as the Boatyard, and Stoke Road up to and beyond the Surgery. We will continue to press. A public consultation is planned and we will let you know when this is scheduled;
2. Improvements to the village Gateways to make them more visible, including signage and traffic calming lines painted on the roads;
3. We requested and have now set up 20mph advisory signs in both the centre of the village and Blisworth Arm. They will be moved around regularly to encourage compliance.
4. New signage is due to be put up in Church Lane to warn about the narrowness of the road;
5. We also applied for a 40mph limit on Towcester Road. Unfortunately this was refused, so we are now strongly arguing for repairs to the footpath, which is clearly unsafe given the speed of the traffic;
6. In the longer term, we have agreement from the Council to look at both a chicane on Stoke Road (near the allotments) and a pedestrian crossing by the School. Both

these projects are at an early stage, with engineers scheduled to assess feasibility in the first instance. If approved, then consultations will take place, so again there will be an opportunity for everyone to express their views;

7. Lastly, we are continuing to press for changes to the signage on the new Knock Lane roundabout which is currently funnelling traffic down Knock Lane and through the village as a rat run to the A43 and Northampton. It is proving difficult to get a response, but we will continue to argue for changes to what is clearly a growing problem for the village.

The Chair strongly emphasised that if residents have an accident that is the result of a faulty footpath, dropped kerb, unsafe road or pothole, that they must report it to WNC. He emphasised the need to write a letter or email to WNC as well as logging the incident on Fix My Street. As Cllr Brown stated, we can only try to persuade WNC of our traffic issues, but if residents formally log any incidents in writing with WNC and persist with them and insist on a response, then they will begin to see the volume of the issues in the village. If residents choose to stay quiet, nothing will change.

The Chair opened the floor for questions from the audience.

Members of the public raised the following issues:

Members of the public volunteered to be part of any future traffic survey on Northampton Road.

A member of the public highlighted that should a chicane be approved, that it was important that the traffic be funnelled away from the subsiding side (nearest to the embankment) of Stoke Road.

A member of the public raised concerns regarding the poor visibility when turning onto the Northampton Road from Station Road travelling towards Blisworth village. Chair requested that the Clerk contact Highways to review the hedges.

Issues in Tiffield of traffic and the supposition that Blisworth residents use Tiffield as a cut-through.

A member of the public asked that the Parish Council address the issue of allotment tenants that do not maintain their plots. The Chair asked the Clerk to send further letters reminding tenants of the need to maintain their plots and the paths between their plots (as per their tenancy agreement).

A member of the public asked the Parish Council to pursue tenants at the allotments that routinely leave the allotment gates open. The Chair explained that as soon as the locks have been installed, then the issue of gates being left open, would be monitored (again as per the tenancy agreement). Cllr Read noted the increase in thefts/burglaries and anti-social behaviour – the gates would help to add further security for the homes that backed onto the allotments. The Chair noted that he had consulted all residents whose homes backed onto the allotments ahead of installing the security fencing and the gates.

A representative of the Blisworth Football Club noted plans for the rebuild were on track and noted that they hoped to fulfil the gap in the provision for 12-16 yrs old by providing various facilities for younger children.

Chair noted the Parish Council's work with the Blisworth Baptist Church to set up a Youth Parish Council, so that the Parish Council could get their opinions regarding facilities for this age group.

A member of the public asked for a memorial bench for a resident in recognition of their contribution to the village. Suggested that a 'just giving' page be set up and promoted via the Blisworth Parish Round and About newsletter.

A member of the public thanked Cllr Brown for pursuing the issue of the footpaths on Stoke Road.

The Chair thanked all the councillors on Blisworth Parish Council and also the army of volunteers in various spheres for their efforts on behalf of the village this year, including the volunteers that helped to organise the refreshments for this Blisworth Parish Meeting.

The meeting closed at 7:20 pm.



Annual highlights 2023/24

Our Priority: Green and clean places

Over the past 12 months we have prioritised the environment and considered the carbon cost of our decision-making, working hard towards our sustainability goals – from improving energy efficiency, reducing waste and achieving net zero emissions by 2030, to making our streets, parks and open spaces cleaner and greener. Here are some of the many highlights.

- Establishing a new dedicated sustainability service was key to steering and developing our response to climate change and as a result more communities, partners and businesses have been engaged over the past year.
- We published a robust set of baseline CO2 emissions data for our Council, giving us a baseline against which to progress a detailed action plan to monitor and reduce these.
- We retained international Green Flag Award status for the high quality of Daventry Country Park, Abington Park, Bradlaugh Fields and Delapre Park, with plans to work towards achieving similar accolades for Towcester's Water Meadows and Hunsbury Country Park.
- Our Cleaner Communities campaign was launched with partners to educate residents on their household duties, raise the profile of the work of our neighbourhood wardens and crackdown on environmental crime such as fly-tipping and littering.
- Our waste contractors in Northampton, Veolia, have introduced a fully electric e-bike which will help keep the streets clean through sustainable travel.
- Our waste services received funding to promote the use of our kerbside recycling for small electrical items and batteries, to help increase the uptake on giving these items a new lease of life.
- We introduced a Public Spaces Protection Order across the Daventry, South Northants and Northampton areas to promote responsible pet ownership and ban smoking in more public spaces.
- We carried out a public consultation which considered how people travel to and from Abington Park, and how we can work with partners and residents to improve travel routes in this area.
- We partnered with local people and organisations to launch the Active Quarter; a project which helps improve access to the vast greenspace between the south of Northampton town centre, Brackmills Industrial Estate and Hardingstone and makes it easier for people in Northampton to reconnect with nature.

Our Priority: Improved life chances

- Helping our residents through the ongoing cost of living crisis has been our top priority over the past 12 months and we've worked with a range of partners to provide a broad range of practical and financial packages.
- Our Trading Standards team worked with Police officers joined forces with partners including His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and members of the Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) disruption team from the East Midlands Specialist Operations Unit, visited five premises in Northampton as part of ongoing activity to tackle the illegal importation and sale of illicit goods. The operation saw approximately 44,000 illegal cigarettes and 12.5kilos of tobacco recovered from one shop. Trading Standards seized 932 illegal vapes from the same premises. Further visits were conducted to lock-up storage sites within the county, and two seizures of 145,740 cigarettes and almost 22kgs of Hand Rolled Tobacco (HRT) were made.
- Our Health Protection team carry out vital visits to businesses to ensure they adhere to robust food hygiene standards. A Northampton restaurant was fined £33,097 for hygiene breaches following successful prosecution by West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) after health protection officers found poor hygiene standards during a routine visit.
- We completed another Safer Streets project in Northampton which included installing lighting upgrades on the Becket's Park safer route footpath and bollard covers promoting the sno van, Flare app and It Only Takes One safety campaign. In addition, we introduced a new taxi marshal service in Northampton to help people travel more safely during peak Night Time Economy (NTE) periods.
- With Northamptonshire Sport, Get Up & Go classes have continued to grow in popularity with more residents attending classes than ever before, helping with strength and balance exercises to keep people well as well as joining in a friendly atmosphere.
- We started the Active Quarter partnership made up of landowners, charities, businesses, community groups and organisations including the Council. The partnership launched a brand-new website designed to make finding and enjoying great outdoor spaces in Northampton even easier. The website includes an outdoor spaces directory and information about street lighting, seating, public toilets, and other useful details as well as upcoming health and wellbeing events and updates about improvements in the area.
- We have been working with the organisers of Collide: A ChoirFest experience that provides the perfect opportunity for people to discover the unique talent we have in West Northamptonshire and discover the benefits of choir singing for themselves while coming together to enjoy a showstopping musical production.
- Our Licensing Team and Northamptonshire Police Safer Roads Police Team are working in partnership to carry out spot checks, focusing on vehicle safety.
- Together with partners, we continue to deliver on our joint Anti-Poverty strategy which sets out how we will support people in financial hardship, what we will do to

help people avoid falling into poverty and how we will work to influence the Government and other national organisations to get the best deal for the people of West Northants. This crucial strategy has brought support to many families and households and will continue to do so as we move into the further years of its delivery.

- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) allocated £5,199,257 to the Council in the fourth round of its Household Support Fund to continue help the most vulnerable with the ongoing cost of living challenges during the 2023/24 financial year. This includes 12,500 families with children continuing to receive meal vouchers during the school holidays, as well as receiving supermarket vouchers for uniforms over the summer. Voluntary and community groups shared out £1.2m in the form of £120 vouchers to support vulnerable households across West Northants. £600,000 allocated towards food clubs and larders. As well as other means of support put in place.
- We worked with our partners and local communities to establish a network of 88 warm spaces across West Northants, which saw over 64,000 visits to over 47 grant funded spaces providing many residents with somewhere warm, friendly and local to go in the colder months. Due to the warm spaces impact and the uptake of community organisations involved, warm spaces evolved into welcoming spaces, which launched in November 2023 putting an emphasis on social connectedness and togetherness, whilst giving residents somewhere warm and friendly to go.
- Our Cost of Living webpages continued to grow in information, becoming a one-stop hub of support and advice for residents impacted by the rising cost of living. Our phone line also offered a dedicated resource, providing a range of tailored advice and information.
- Our improvement journey for providing better services for our children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) continues to progress with the launch of a new partnership SEND and Alternative Provision strategy, created together with young people, families and partner organisations. The three-year strategy sets out the key priorities towards ensuring the West Northamptonshire Partnership better meets the needs of families over the next three years as we continue to see an ever-increasing demand. This is in addition to our new 'SEND Ranges' being introduced which provide a set standard for each child or young person in an education setting to better outline what support is needed based on children's individual needs or behaviours.
- As part of our SEND improvement journey, we prioritised work to create more school places for children with SEND. This saw plans progress for a much-needed 250 space special school in Tiffield, located in Towcester, for children and young people between the ages of four to 18 with SEND.
- In addition, The Nest at Chiltern opened its doors to 30 spaces for Key Stage students with an Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), with a further 15 spaces set to open in Autumn 2024. As well as a further 20 places created at Hardingstone and Castle Academies.
- Joined up working with local health, care, community and voluntary sector organisations flourished with a new joined-up strategy that looks to help residents of Northamptonshire 'Live Your Best Life' which provides a refreshed focus on residents

and local communities over the next 10 years. This has led to the establishment of nine Local Area Partnerships across West Northants, each covering communities of between 30,000 and 50,000 people with the aim to ensure health, care, community and voluntary sector services are working together to best meet the needs of their local community by providing tailored and targeted support that will improve better health and care outcomes for those who live there.

- We partnered with Northampton Hope Centre to open a new temporary night shelter; one of the biggest expansions of support for Northampton's rough sleepers in years. The 7-day service provides emergency accommodation to those who find themselves in housing crisis.
- The journey to improve children's social care and the outcomes for our children across Northamptonshire continues to make encouraging progress, with more positive feedback from Ofsted inspectors during their latest visit. The Councils and NCT are working together to find solutions whilst also continuing to improve the service in line with Ofsted recommendations.
- The first inspection of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) since the inception of Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) and the establishment of the two unitary councils, North Northamptonshire (NNC) and West Northamptonshire (WNC) has found that the service is 'good'. The quality of resettlement policy and provision was also inspected, which was separately rated as 'Outstanding'.
- We received almost £575k to help improve adult numeracy in the area - the first tranche of funding approved from a £1.9m bid submitted to the Government's Multiply Fund. Money will be allocated over a three-year period and could benefit more than 3,000 people in the area during that time.
- Our School Attendance Support Service arranged virtual sessions for parents and carers who home school children aimed at helping young people to stay safe online.
- The Council stepped up its support for care leavers by signing the Care Leaver Covenant to formally pledge its commitment to support those who leave care to live independently. As part of our new commitment, we announced from April 2024, a discretionary Council Tax discount will be automatically applied to the accounts of eligible Care Leavers aged 18-21, after considering other applicable discounts and exemptions.
- We also staged our annual campaign to bring comfort and joy to those staying in West Northamptonshire refuges, with donations of Christmas hampers.
- Gold status in the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme we were awarded Gold status for our work in supporting our armed forces community, also setting up community hubs and resigning the Armed Forces Covenant for the year ahead.
- We launched our new webpages full of information and support for adult social care and wellbeing – helping to give residents advice that they can access themselves on how to stay and live well. Webpages can be found here:
www.westnorthants.gov.uk/adultsandwellbeing

Our Priority: Connected Communities

- In December 2023 we introduced enforcement to prevent and reduce people from 'double parking' and from parking in front of dropped kerbs. These practices can be

dangerous and pose a danger to pedestrians and other road users including impeding emergency services vehicles.

- This year we procured a new and exciting piece of technology, The JCB Pothole Pro machine, which will provide an efficient way to carry out road repairs, four times faster than standard methods – while providing a quality solution. The Pothole Pro enables WNC's highways partner Kier to carry out an improved repair service allowing them to cut the defect, crop the edges and clean the area with one machine before it is filled. The investment in this new technology forms part of the Council's long-term vision to improve the road network across the area and follows the Government announcement to invest more than £2.8 million additional funds into our Highways in 2023/24.
- The council launched grant funding opportunities which aims to create additional volunteering opportunities in West Northants. The Community Funding grants project has received £47,000 from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).
- The Northampton Museum and Art Gallery Volunteer Military Archive and Research Team have won a national award and been highly commended for the Volunteers in Museum Learning Award issued by the Marsh Trust in conjunction with the British Museum.
- Our Car parking charges have been reviewed to introduce two hours' free parking on Saturdays and Sundays in Northampton's town centre off street car parks plus a set weekend all-day charge of £2.20.
- Our Highways partner, Kier, have worked with local schools to raise awareness of road safety and deliver projects which add social value to their community, including the introduction of a new sensory garden for one local school and primary school pupils naming our fleet of gritters.
- We are providing free parking up to 10.30am on Saturdays at Daventry and Brixworth country parks and reducing the proposed maximum daily charge at the two sites by a third to £8.
- Progressing proposals for the Abington Park Area Active Travel scheme which would introduce segregated cycleways and footways to provide better alternatives to driving, reduce traffic and increase safety for walkers and cyclists
- Starting preparatory work on the new Northampton North-West Relief Road which will improve connectivity and help to reduce traffic congestion.
- Continuing to work with partners to future-proof the digital connectivity of West Northants through the Superfast Broadband scheme and with partners. CityFibre, the UK's largest independent full fibre platform, has now laid a staggering 840km of full fibre internet cables through Northampton as part of its £40m initiative for the area.
- As part of a new pilot initiative launched by the Rural West Local Area Partnership, serving the communities of Daventry East & Woodford, Daventry West and Weedon saw nine students in Years 5 and 6 at Daventry's Monksmoor Primary School receive free bikes to encourage young people to take part in physical activity, enjoy the outdoors and connect with friends. Providing access to free bikes, aims to support our younger generation to consider active travel options that are local to them, as well as prompt enjoyment through using more sustainable modes of transport.

- We have built significant reputation in relation to the death management in terms of handling of mass fatalities and are building a new mortuary to create a unique public sector partnership across health and local authority provision.

Our Priority: Thriving villages and towns

- We launched a Rural Business Grants programme to support businesses in the most rural parts of West Northants to diversify and grow. Utilising £919,772 of UK Shared Prosperity (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Funding (REPF), this programme will provide up to 50% of equal match-funding of between £2,500 and £100,000 to businesses located in Defra's designated rural areas within West Northamptonshire.
- We organised a packed summer weekend of bank holiday events and activities for thousands of residents to mark the Coronation of King Charles III. Our Coronation Big Lunch and After Party in the grounds of Northampton's historic Delapré Abbey was attended by thousands of residents who enjoyed a range of live music, performances, activities and stalls.
- We worked with our partners to stage over 30 community events and activities to bring our communities together, celebrate diversity, foster good relationships including Srebrenica, International Youth Day, International Women's Day, Northampton Pride, Diwali, Holocaust Memorial Day, Refugee Week, the Male Role model awards.

Our Priority: Economic Development

Attracting inward investment, breathing new life into our urban areas, and supporting businesses across West Northamptonshire have underpinned our work to drive economic development during our second year as a Council, with a broad range of activities moving forward.

- We hosted a roundtable event with the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to discuss the ongoing issue of retail crime and violence and abuse against shop staff. We also accompanied Business Crime Investigators on visits to local retailers to discuss their experiences of retail crime in Northamptonshire and gather the best possible evidence to help police in the Retail Crime Team follow up on incidents.
- We were successfully granted more than £5.4m from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund to boost our local economy over the next three years. This is the largest allocation in the Southeast Midlands and will be used to improve people's life chances, increase skills, create stronger communities, and support local businesses.
- We encouraged residents across West Northants to support our independent businesses as part of activities for Small Business Saturday including offering free parking in Northampton town centre, and continue to support local traders and shopping locally throughout the year.

- We took part in the annual Heritage Open Days festival which saw hundreds of people explore and learn about cultural and historical attractions across the area for free.
- We worked with partners to progress plans to restore the Old Black Lion public house in Marefair, Northampton, with conservation repair work starting recently to bring the derelict premises back into use for our local community.
- Work started on the multi-million-pound redevelopment of Northampton's historic Market Square, which will include a flexible event space, bespoke fixed stalls, more trees, tiered seating and an interactive water feature.
- To help support residents with access to the market's temporary location at Commercial Street, we are working with Bounds to offer free journeys from the bus station to the market.
- Ambitions to amplify Northampton and establish Greyfriars as a creative hub for the town, weaving together culture, performance, craft and youth facilities, have been met with much positivity by the public.
- One of Northampton's main shopping districts, Abington and Fish Street will undergo extensive transformation as Kier was appointed in September. Preparatory works have been carried out in autumn 2023, and the scheme starts in February 2024.
- Following seven months of extensive redevelopment works to transform a former derelict supermarket in Towcester into a new parking facility for the town, Sponne Arcade Car Park officially opened to the public in June 2023. The former Co-op and Poundstretcher building in the Sponne Arcade located in the heart of the town stood empty for four years prior to the construction of the expanded parking facility. The derelict stores were demolished, the area was levelled out to provide a high-quality central parking facility and expand the site from 70 to 150 formal spaces. This more than double the parking space in the town centre and provide improved lighting and safety features for visitors to the area.

Our Priority: Robust resource management and good governance

- Our work on transforming and improving public services inherited from the old legacy councils continued at pace throughout our second year, with the new unitary council's efficiencies on course to save taxpayers a further £34million than originally anticipated by the end of 2025/26.
- This year we worked hard to set a balanced budget for 2024/25, despite facing financial pressures like other councils due in the current economic climate, with high inflation rates driving up running costs and an increase in demand for services, particularly around supporting children in care and vulnerable adults.
- We made tough choices to set a Council Tax increase of 4.99% for 24/25, which remains well below current inflation levels but crucially generating an extra £12m to protect essential frontline services – with 2% of the increase going towards adult social care. This represents an average increase of £1.63 a week on a Band D property.

- During 2024/25 we plan to invest a total of almost £143m in its capital programme, to improve local infrastructure and assets such as land, buildings and equipment.
- We're looking to spend an estimated £20m in public health funding from the Government in the year ahead to progress a range of schemes aimed at improving residents' wellbeing, reducing health inequalities and continuing to support communities through the ongoing cost of living challenges.
- Within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) we plan to invest £54m of capital funds in social housing during the next financial year, which forms part of a total five-year capital programme which amounts to £279m. Also built into the plans is investment in decarbonisation which is estimated to impact on 500 homes.
- We restructured a range of service areas to improve efficiency, including bringing our community-focussed services together with a place-making collaborative focus, including libraries, economic regeneration, ports and cultural services.
- 2023 saw the first full year where public health has sat solely within West Northamptonshire Council, working closely with partners to serve residents of West Northants with services that meet their needs.
- We gave our feedback and recommendations to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of its review of our Council's electoral boundaries which are due to be introduced at our next elections in May 2025. We also engaged with town and parish councils and started the Stage One Consultation with residents, parishes, and businesses in West Northants to actively participate in shaping future electoral and governance arrangements for parishes within the area.
- Our Revenues and Benefits colleagues worked around the clock to distribute a range of benefits and payments to residents struggling during the cost-of-living difficulties, including the government's £150 Council Tax energy rebates to households.
- We reviewed our buildings as part of ongoing work to bring our services together more economically and efficiently for residents and pursued plans to relocate from our current Daventry offices at Lodge Road to a new locality hub at the nearby Abbey Centre.
- We have progressed with proposals to relocate the majority of our office workers to its base in One Angel Square (OAS), Northampton. Council staff currently based in the modern part of the Guildhall in Northampton and some teams currently working from The Forum in Towcester will relocate to OAS in stages during 2024 and early 2025 and Northampton's One Stop Shop will also move from the Guildhall to the lower ground floor of OAS, resulting in a more modern and accessible service for residents.
- We continued to develop the way we inform, engage and interact with residents, including key improvements to our website, our residents e-newsletter, regular briefings for town and parish councils, and increased audiences on our social media channels.
- We have successfully defended a legal challenge in relation to one of our key community initiatives through demonstrating sound and robust decision making.
- We have established a new legal service saving money and enabling dedicated support to key teams such as SEND and enforcement to focus on better outcomes.

Annual Review of BMC 2023

Membership

The membership has remained vibrant, with 58 fully paid members and a number of guests who have visited open meetings either FOC or paying a reduced fee. We continue to welcome ladies of all ages, not just mothers and not just from Blisworth. Attempts to alter the name of the club to reflect this change in focus have met with a certain amount of reluctance from original members and would cause problems changing bank account details etc., hence the use of just the initials in our publicity.

Attendances ranged from 16 to 68, the average being 36, meaning that most months a small profit was made, certainly covered our costs on evenings when alcoholic drinks were provided, a speaker was paid or donation given. The raffle, run by Anne Goss, Geraldine Jackson, Ros Bedford and Rose Warner during the year, also helped cover costs, with a number of prizes being donated by members.

The committee co-opted three new members, each of whom played an active role in the organisation.

Activities

In January we held our AGM, followed by a “Who Am I” game to get people mixing and chatting after the Christmas break.

In February we celebrated Pancake Day with information about pancakes round the world, followed by a competition to see who could toss a pancake the most times. Sadly, the pancakes that we had bought failed the resilience test and there were many casualties, but we then ate fresh pancakes with lots of different fillings.

In March we welcomed Emma Irwin of “Thatch and Bowl” bakery in Stoke Road. Emma showed us her styles of cake decoration with the chance to learn icing techniques, then we consumed her cookies and brownies.

In April we hosted a “Loose Women meets Question Time”. A panel of local ladies answered questions from the audience on a range of topics. A very entertaining evening, one that we plan to hold again next year, with a significant difference.

In May, we arranged a social evening at The Hungry Horse restaurant at Wootton. Good food, good service, not expensive and very enjoyable.

In June we discovered lesser visited parts of Towcester for our annual Treasure Hunt, answering challenging questions set by Linda and Chris, then had a buffet supper at The Brave Old Oak.

A group of committee members attended the Blisworth Primary School's Spelling Bee, where the annual book token prize was presented to a pupil in memory of Rita Bryan, a former member of the school catering staff.

BMC also sent a donation towards the funeral expenses of Ursula Brown, who passed away this year.

In July we held a Coronation Supper in Victoria House Garden, welcomed by his Majesty. Yvonne Barker provided a delicious cold supper and the wine flowed.

In August we had a fascinating talk by Paul Barwick on the life of Nancy Wake, the "White Mouse" British spy who was so feared by the Gestapo in WW II.

In September we played Board games. It was a dreadful evening weather-wise, but the 16 ladies who braved the conditions had a great time playing Snakes and Ladders, Scrabble, Hungry Hippos etc.

In October we held an open evening to welcome Hilary Spurrier's Ukrainian guests, who gave a personal view of their lives before and during the Russian invasion. It was an opportunity for us to raise funds for them to send home to their town, in total £448 was collected from the raffle, door monies, donations and the sale of souvenirs.

In November, Jackie from Rock Those Frocks returned to show us her winter range of clothes and accessories. We recruited models from amongst our members, having an enjoyable evening, whilst making lots of purchases. We intend to invite her back in 2025.

In December it was Christmas Party time. Having given away most of our old crockery, we were grateful to the Blisworth Friendship Group (BFG) for the loan of their plates. We provided a buffet style meal of vegetarian quiches, pie, ham and beef, with all the trimmings, ending the evening with carols and Christmas songs.

Acknowledgements

None of these events could have taken place without the support of the committee and members who have volunteered to help each meeting. Special mention must go to Beryl and Val for keeping a tight rein on the finances, to Linda Yuill for her secretarial work, publishing details on Facebook and sending out emails, as well as with Linda Gunnett and Ann North for all the shopping and generally anything necessary, to Ros, Rose, Anne Goss and Geraldine for organising the raffle and ensuring that we always had sufficient tea, coffee and refreshments. Geraldine was also responsible for sending cards and flowers to members who have been unwell, in hospital or bereaved.

The committee, en bloc, were willing to stand for another year, I thank them for their support. However, I am of the opinion that younger members should take a more active role in the running of this very enjoyable community group.

It is with regret that we accepted Anne Goss' resignation from the committee at the end of October. We all know how much Anne has done over the years and understand her reasons. She was presented with a voucher from Dobbies to spend on plants for her garden.

Blisworth W.I. Annual Parish Report – April 2023/2024

Blisworth W.I. continues to thrive, meeting on the second Thursday each month for fun and friendship.

Our meetings are always varied with interesting speakers and we try to keep to the W.I. five main principles – Sport and Leisure, Home economics, Craft, Music and Drama and Public and Community Affairs. Our annual Resolutions are always an important part of our programme raising awareness not only to members countrywide but also to the Government and this year highlighted Clean Rivers for People and Wildlife.

We have learnt about Women in the R.N.L.I. and in complete contrast enjoyed a fascinating talk on the amazing walking trail of the Camino de Santiago. Three talented singer/musicians have entertained us with a wide variety of popular songs. In November we changed venues from the Village Hall to the Chapel to learn some fascinating facts about the journey of the Blisworth Tapestry which hangs proudly in the coffee house. We had an hilarious talk from a Pantomime Dame learning about the origins and history of Pantomime, and enjoyed an interesting talk on Tutankhamun's Egypt. Queen Victoria, Her friend John Brown and Her Lady in Waiting Lady Roxburghe came to visit and gave us a most interesting talk on Her Majesty's wardrobe.

We were proud to be a part of a country wide W.I. initiative and sent 137 knitted and crocheted Poppies to add to the total of 22,442 poppies sent to the fields of Normandy, marking the 80th anniversary this year.

We had fun playing croquet at the new County croquet club in Roade, and enjoy our 'Four seasons', meals – Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, at local pub/restaurants.

We supported the village school summer fete with a cake stall, and the village Garage sale, and continue to support Cynthia Spencer Hospice with cake donations and every month donate items to Towcester Food Bank.

As I say each year Blisworth W.I. continues to flourish and next year we will be 100 years old, still having fun, learning new facts, drinking tea, eating cake and enjoying each other's company.

Denise Ingram

Blisworth Friendship Group

We have had another lovely successful year at BFG. We've had Speakers, quizzes, silly games, a trip to the Royal Oak for lunch, a 5-hour cruise along The River Nene, a Christmas party and lots of other happy meetings.

We also had a successful move from The Football Club to the Village Hall, so had to change the day from Wednesday to Tuesday.

We were surprised and delighted when Mick and Daphne Wreford nominated us for a donation of £500 from Hollowell Steam Rally, and then another £100 from Santa.

It's a real pleasure to run this group. Members are happy and appreciative and the Committee all work happily together.

Blisworth Arts Society Annual Report

A keen group of talented artists meets each week in the village hall on a Friday afternoon. Highlights of our year have been workshops on drawing fungi, framing pictures and capturing seascapes. Our annual art exhibition was well supported and the quality of work was exceptional.

New members are always welcome.

Annual Report for StitcheryDo craft Group 2023/4

The StitcheryDo craft group became independent from the Blisworth Tapestry Project in 2021. Since then, we have made full use of our bank account, with three former trustees of the BTP, Margaret Holiday, Angela Cadd and Ros Bedford, becoming signatories.

The group continues to run along the same lines as before, with self-help and in-house tutorials, visits and occasional outside speakers.

We have been gifted fabric, wools, embroidery threads, haberdashery and a quantity of lace making equipment, which we have shared amongst the group. We use the sewing machines and specialised tools that were purchased previously from grants obtained by Carol Arnall. We also have a library of craft books for loan.

All these items are safely stored in the cupboards provided by the Village Hall.

We welcome anyone to join, paying a fee of £4 per session, which includes tuition as required, use of our resources and refreshments. The session runs from 10.00 until 2.00pm on the first Thursday of each month.

During this year we have created Christmas and Easter gifts, cards and decorations, learnt to crochet, made quilted bread baskets and recycled jeans to make unique denim bags. We have made tassels, scarves, learnt to do wet and dry felting, also a number of patchwork items. We have welcomed new members, including grandchildren to our sessions. In March we visited the NEC craft exhibition in Birmingham. We are always open to suggestions for projects and are happy to respond. Some members prefer to pursue their own work but enjoy the opportunity to meet other like-minded people in this welcoming environment.

Personally, I would like to thank Angela and Ros for their continuing loyalty to the group and all their help month by month, also the core of ladies who help by setting up the hall and donating their time and experience.

The group is an example of community involvement and we welcome anyone to come along to see what we have to offer. We notify members each month by email with details of activities planned and publish in the Round & About, although the group is open to anyone, not just Blisworth residents.

Margaret Holiday

01604858590

Heritage Society report for the APCM

This has been a busy and successful year for the society. Our membership has remained buoyant at just under 50 and our monthly meetings have been well attended. A few members have attended every meeting.

Highlights during the year have been talks about Young's nursery, the Blisworth vineyard , a "Tommy's war" and excellent musical entertainment by "Frumenty" in December. The summer outing to the Northants Archaeology centre was very interesting despite the dreadful weather.

The society has been active in other ways too. The coronation scrapbook was unveiled in October and all were impressed with the quantity and quality of entries. It is good to capture Blisworth today and create archives for the future. Hope fully a few more pages will be added. This project was Highly Commended at the Northamptonshire Heritage Forum award ceremony.

The National Heritage Open weekend saw us in the Baptist Church to highlight the Tapestry and encourage more people to see it. All who came were impressed by the size and detail of the work and enjoyed the video about it and talk about the history of the village.

The society is proud to act as steward of the tapestry. we are ensuring that it is regularly cleaned and maintained and are keeping it publicised. An article about it will appear in this year's Northamptonshire Heritage Forum magazine (Hindsight)

Our archive continues to grow and we are enormously grateful to the Village Hall and Playing field organisation for space in the upstairs room for it. New cabinets have been purchased and the task of cataloguing new items and transferring existing ones will begin shortly. The Parish Council have kindly awarded us a grant of £500 for a display cabinet in which we can mount a regular exhibition of artefacts. We aim to hold a grand opening later this year. money.

Members of the society regularly give talks about aspects of Blisworth History to other societies and we have recently had an article about the tapestry published in a local History Journal.



Blisworth Village Hall and Playing Field Association

(Registered Charity No. 304161)

19 Stoke Road, Blisworth. NN7 3BZ

Blisworth Village Hall Annual Report

Since June 2023, I have been the new Booking Clerk for the charity known as Blisworth Village Hall and Playing Field Association with the main focus being on the management of the Village Hall. During this time there have been several changes and improvements, with support from all Committee Members and Trustees and for this I am very grateful. Please see these changes and improvements below along with what the future holds for the charity over the coming year.

Jo Brooks

• **Installation of a key box**

With ad hoc bookings (not regular hirers), gaining access to the set of keys meant a key holder needed to arrange a meet up for drop off and collection. This was time consuming and relied on people being readily available for this to happen. Therefore, a key box was installed to the front of the property (on the top beam to which the handrail is attached to). The following procedures take place:

- Before each ad hoc hire the code to the key box is changed, with the keys put in.
- The code is then sent to the hirer within 6 hours before the start of hire.
- Once the hire has finished, the keys are then collected.

• **Website**

The Village Hall had a website already in place however was not fully fit for purpose. With new tabs along the top of each page, the following information can now be found:

- **Home** which includes the charity number, Gigaclear logo, links to the 'booking tab', a brief description of what the Hall has to offer and the strap line 'A local charity managing and support the Village Hall for the community of Blisworth'.
- **Calendar & Bookings** which is the link to our online booking system, 'Hallmaster'.
- **Hire Information** gives the agreed cost of hire along with the deposit details, a link to the 'booking tab' and details on the use of the key box.
- **Facilities** includes pictures alongside each area of the Hall, with a brief description of what is available. This includes the use of the microphone system, hearing loop, new fridge/freezer and a karaoke machine.
- **History** is a condensed version of the original description with appropriate pictures and photos.
- **FAQs** include questions which a lot of people query about (rather than asking through email).
- **Policies** all of which have been approved and adopted by the committee are also referred to within the booking system, 'Hallmaster'.

• **Booking System with 'Hallmaster'**

It took a while to set up, but the time saved with regards to bookings will be very beneficial. The system provides the following:

- For the Regular Groups I have set these sessions up for the rest of the year and will continue to do this annually (I will just need the dates for the coming year).
- Each Regular Group has one person assigned to the administrative side of the system and an email has been sent to them allowing access to future dates and amend if required. This also allows me to send out any invoices, receipts and keep a track of payments made.
- For financial purposes, the system also produces reports when needed to give information on what is generating the most income for the Hall.
- Venue settings – this has allowed me to set up a calendar for each session, provide the setting up/tidy up times for each session, give information on our capacity and set up the link to the Hiring Agreement and Booking Policy, which when a booking is made, they agree to.
- Rooms/Facilities – people can book out the Main Hall or Meeting Room and the use of the kitchen is also provided as an option.
- Charges matrix –
 - Main Hall:
 - Non-resident rate at £50 per session
 - Village resident rate at £15 per session
 - Organisation rate at £15 per session
 - Village resident organisation rate at £13 per session
 - Classes rate at £13 per hour
 - Upstairs Meeting room is fixed at £6 per hour for all.
- **ALL REGULAR GROUPS HAVE THEIR AGREED RATE HONOURED AND THIS IS REFLECTED IN THE INVOICE/RECEIPT WHEN SENT OUT.**
- Activity type – the types of activities currently on the system are ‘class, meeting, children’s party, other function, public event or club/societies.
- The use of the karaoke machine is down as an added option with a charge of £5 per hire.
- Invoice settings – this allows me to input the bank details for BACS or cheque payment and will be on the invoice sent out with their booking.
- Email configuration – this has allowed me to set up emails to send:
 - When a booking is confirmed.
 - The day before the event with information as set out in the original Hiring Agreement.
 - The day after the event to check how it all went and for them to contact me via email for the return of their deposit.

- **Facebook Page**

To advertise the Hall to a wider audience there is now a Facebook Page called Blisworth Village Hall and Playing Field Association. Here there is a link to the main website page, updates from different groups, upcoming events and important news.

- **Policies/Paperwork**

For the Blisworth Village Hall and Playing Field Association to be compliant and protected against any complaint, the following policies and risk assessments are now in place and can be found on the website:

- Health and Safety – this includes fire safety. A Generic Risk Assessment for the Hall is included with this, along with a Fire Safety Risk Assessment.

- Equal Opportunities – this is to ensure all persons are treated fairly and equally.
 - Wi-Fi and Acceptable Use – since we now have Gigaclear, all users need to be aware of how to use it safely and securely.
 - Data Protection – with the focus of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) being heightened over the past few years, we need to be aware of any personal data we hold of hirers and how to store them safely. A disclaimer has been created for all persons to sign whose data we have on file.
 - Hall Booking and Hiring Agreement – this is given out to all hirers when making a booking. It gives them information about the Terms and Conditions for hiring out the Hall and the Hiring Agreement is a form of contract between them and us.
 - Safeguarding – this is to protect children and young people who use the Hall as well as Adults at Risk. I have completed the Basic Safeguarding Training and the Designated Safeguarding Lead Training. In addition, I now have an advanced DBS which is on the update service. **Part of this process is also delivering Safeguarding Training to Committee members. This took place on Monday 15th January 2024 in the Main Hall between 6:30pm and 8:00pm. Posters promoting people being aware of Safeguarding are going to be put up in the Hall (mainly toilet areas and notice boards) along with my contact details should anyone have a disclosure they need to refer.**
 - Complaints and Whistleblowing – for procedures involved in making complaints regarding the Trustees.
 - Social media – as we now have a functional website and using the social media platform, Facebook, this is to keep all users safe.
- **Housekeeping**
 - A bulk order of cleaning products has been made which will suffice for a longer period of time. With the increase in bookings, this will help with the upkeep of the Hall.
 - A deep clean of the premises has now taken place. This will be an annual process to ensure the Hall is kept clean and presentable to all users.
 - Another food waste bin has been purchased along with a recycling bin, encouraging the use of recycling by all users. Making a big push towards being ‘greener’ this has been a priority and already we are seeing an improvement.
 - The Fire Alarm System has now had its annual service and is being tested regularly along with the Emergency Lighting system. I have created a spreadsheet to record these tests (as well as recording in the formal logbook) to keep outside of the building should a fire occur, and the paperwork goes up in smoke!

Actions over the coming year:

- **Business Plan**

To support future projects and apply for grants, I am in the process of completing a Business Plan. This includes future projects over the next year, two years, three years and five years. Once approved by the Trustees, this will be made available for everyone on the website.

- **Promotion of the Village Hall**

To cater for the younger generation of the village (including children), links will be made for clubs and activities for this group of people. Further advertising through Facebook, notice boards and Round and About will take place for the Hall to be used for parties and other functions.

- **Redecoration and maintenance of the Main Hall**

To aid in the promotion of the Hall, a redecoration will take place. This includes painting of all woodwork, touch up of walls, deep clean of the floor and another layer added to the flat roof.

Blisworth Village Hall Hire

Below are the number of ad hoc hires throughout the past year (May 2023 to April 2024) mainly taking place at the weekend along with the regular hires we have each month. Please note:

- Jo Brooks took over as Booking Clerk in June 2023;
- Blisworth Village Hall and Playing Field Association website and Facebook Page was not fully up and running until October 2023;
- Hallmaster online booking system was launched in March 2024.

May 2023	June 2023	July 2023 Kids party
August 2023 Surprise Anniversary Party Kids party	September 2023 Kids party	October 2023 Canal annual meeting Christening party Kids party Baby gender reveal party
November 2023 Kids party Yoga exam preparation STEM children's group	December 2023 New Years' Eve Party Christmas Craft Fair Kids party	
January 2024 Bellringers meeting Kids party Photo shoot	February 2024 Kids party Kids party	March 2024 Kids party Kids party Jewellery valuation Kids party Table top sale
April 2024 Art Show – all weekend Wedding preparation party		

Regular Groups

- Blisworth Arts Society – once a week during term time
- Short Mat Bowls – Monday and Wednesday afternoons
- Blisworth Parish Council Meeting – once a month
- Blisworth Friendship Group – once a fortnight from January 2024
- Stitchery Do – once a month
- Blisworth Heritage Society – once a month
- Blisworth WI – once a month
- Blisworth Mother's Club – once a month
- Blisworth Film Club – once a month
- Pilates and Yoga – Monday mornings and Wednesday evenings

REPORT TO THE PARISH ASSEMBLY FROM THE BLISWORTH VILLAGE HALL AND PLAYING FIELDS ASSOCIATION MAY 2024

The Village Hall has had a very busy year. We have appointed a bookings clerk and Jo Brooks has been a great addition to the team. She has updated or written all the procedures and populated the new booking system. This is up and running and after the considerable initial work has made everything fit for purpose. The key lock has meant that there is more flexibility for arrangements and saves someone having to attend to unlock the Hall for casual hirings. Jo has written a comprehensive report which is attached.

We have utilised the storage space left by Pre-school and there are accessible cupboards in the rear storage room which are used by Stitchery and BMC. We have also moved the majority of the cleaning materials from the storeroom off the kitchen and installed a fridge freezer. In addition BFG has moved to the Village Hall while the new Football Club House is built. They have storage in the kitchen and the rear store room. As we hoped we have been able to move the art boards to the cupboards in the entrance hall. This has proved most successful and resolved a difficult health and safety concern with carrying the boards up and down the narrow stairs.

The Heritage Society asked whether they could place some storage cupboards in the Upstairs Meeting Room. The cupboards will be used to house historical records and would be readily available for display by appointment or on open days. It was agreed and the majority of cupboards are in situ and we are waiting for the electrician to install a further power socket for the display cabinet.

We are obtaining quotes for changes to the kitchen which will enable us to install the under-counter water heater and remove those over the sinks. The narrowness of the area makes it difficult to change the sinks. We have accepted a quote for the flat roof and hope to have the work done in the summer. We also intend to paint some areas of the main hall and refresh others. There is also some structural damage in the rear lobby above the fire doors which needs replastering and decorating.

We are also obtaining quotes for a change to the outdoor lighting, which would be directed downwards rather than flat on the wall.

We would also like to install a defibrillator at the rear of the building and with the PC's help looking at how to proceed.

Attached is also a list of the usage of the Village Hall over the next year

Gigaclear were satisfied with the use and advertisement of their free broadband and have given us a further year.

Parking is still a problem with residents in the area using the car park regularly. Users carrying equipment, distances to travel or mobility needs should have room to park

ACRE has continued to keep us up to date on all the guidance, risk assessments and paperwork. They are always ready with help and advice.

We have changed our bank to Metro and after initial teething problems it has settled.

The accounts for the year end 31st March 2024 will be available at our AGM on the 16th May.

The 250 Club

The 250 Club which supports the Village Hall is running well. Many contributors now pay by bank transfer. We are very grateful to Estelle Rose and her band of collectors and deliverers.

The Playing Fields

I reported last year that the Football Club lease has been completed and signed by both parties. However, the Football Foundation on behalf of the FC have asked for a variation to ensure their right of way over the track. We are attempting to find out if we are in a position to give that assurance before signing.

We are also in correspondence with BT/Openreach about a wayleave for them to extend the telegraph wire from the last pole across the car park up to the mast. We need to ensure that the height of the pole at the far side of the field will give sufficient clearance for any large vehicles wishing to cross into the car park. Cellnex the owners of the mast wish to raise it by 5 feet and install another antenna. We are considering the implications. All the proposals will mean disruption particularly with the access to the Scout Community Hall.

The new Club House build has commenced and it is hoped that it will be completed late summer.

Rabbit fencing will also be installed after the build.

Ann North Secretary Blisworth Village Hall and Playing Fields

May 2024

BLISWORTH PARISH CHURCH
ST JOHN'S

Report to Parish Council May 2024

The past year has been busy as usual. Of course there are the usual housekeeping items to deal with – cleaning of gutters, servicing the boiler, organ and fire extinguishers, routine cleaning, grass cutting etc. Many volunteers help in so many ways.

The church is open every day, and is a welcome place of calm for folk to visit and take time out from busy schedules.

A monthly “coffee chat and cake” morning is held at the home of Pat and Mason Masterman at 7 Pond Bank, on the last Friday from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

We have plans to upgrade the heating system. The boiler is many years old, and some parts are becoming unavailable, so that repairs may become impossible. We would like to instal combined light/heat chandeliers, which have proved very efficient, and aesthetically pleasing, in other churches. However we only have a domestic power supply, which would not support the new system. We have approached National Grid, and found that the cost for upgrading our system would be in the region of £11000. With the proposed heating units coming in at over £40000, we will have to do some serious fund raising, and will be looking for grants to help. Once completed, this work will make the church so much more useable for groups, study sessions etc. throughout the year.

Each autumn we welcome talented local artists who display their work as part of the Northants art trail. They will be with us again for ten days in September.

We were sorry this month to say farewell to Angela Cheesbrough who has served St. John's as Warden for over 20 years. She will be very much missed, and we wish her well in her new home.

Our ministry team has been joined by Curate, Graham Brack, whose home is in Yardley Gobion. He serves the whole benefice, and preaches regularly in all the churches. His placement is for three years, and he has been warmly welcomed for his approachability and scriptural preaching. Also with the ministry team is Helen Halson, a well-known village resident, who is in training for ordination, and regularly takes services, including the Christmas Eve Christingle.

Our weekly services are at 11 a.m. The first, second and fourth Sundays include Holy Communion, and third Sundays are family worship. When there is a fifth Sunday, we do not meet in Blisworth but visit one of the other churches in the Benefice for a group service. All are welcome to any of our services.

For enquiries, please contact Canon Richard Stainer at canon.stainer@gmail.com or warden Fiona McKenzie on 01604859541