



WINTER NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2023

From the Chair of the Parish Council, Anthony Shutes

Dear Residents,

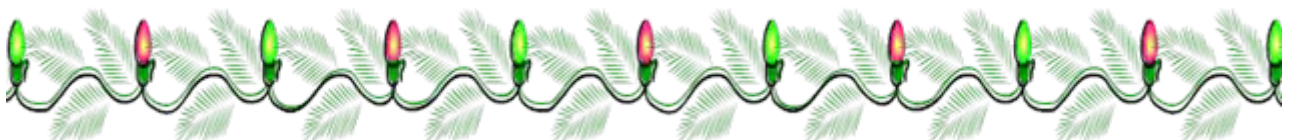
Wishing you all seasonal greetings. I hope you have all noticed that most of the ditching, hedging and final grass cutting have been completed, including the flailing of the newly acquired Barnett fields in Wonersh, which is now open to walkers. We have our biennial tree surveys being undertaken in December over all land within the responsibility of the Parish, which will no doubt generate a list of tree management works.

However, the most significant event over the last 6 months has been the purchase of the Barnett fields and drawdown of £200,000 from the Public Works Loan Board to pay for nearly half the cost of the fields and woods, with the balance being funded by generous donations. The whole process of purchase, consultation and loan application was certainly intensive, but rewarding when so many residents have approached Councillors to say thank for preserving the land for the benefit of the community.

We have also at last agreed the terms with Waverley Borough Council for a 125 year lease over some 47 acres of land (13 acres in Shamley Green and 33 acres in Wonersh). We have already been looking after the mowing and ditches on the open land for the last four years (with the help of financial grants from Waverley). Waverley will continue to maintain the woodland areas, which are mostly on either side of the road north of Wonersh, and the Greens in Shamley Green and Lords Hill Common. Sadly the Parish Council grant from Waverley ends this year and we will need to increase the precept to cover the shortfall – more on this below.

Following endorsement at the 21 September 2023 Public meeting, we have reached an outline agreement to sell Gerald's Wood to the adjacent land owner, who has agreed to retain public access up the steps and in addition allow access to a path through their land, and so permit a longer walking route up through the woods and then descending into the fields to the NW and exiting further up Chinthurst lane. We are now in discussions with Surrey County Council on whether they will adopt the route as a formal footpath. We expect a few twists as the discussions progress!

Finally and most importantly, we have three new Councillors; Rob Merriman and Kevin Sloan representing Shamley Green and George Sobek in Wonersh. We will have a new vacancy in Shamley Green in the new year, as we say goodbye to Mike Band who is stepping down after decades of public service as Borough Councillor, with a stint as the Mayor of Waverley Borough Council, and a Parish Councillor. We wish Mike all the best for the future.





BARNETT FIELDS UPDATE

The purchase was completed in August. We raised an amazing £205,000 pounds of donations including gift aid mostly via the Womersley Foundation, who were also a generous donor. The immediate intention is to have an annual flail of the fields and mow regular paths throughout the grass growing season. We have also set up a small resident working party to develop a three year plan to advise the Parish Council on the management structure options, maintenance requirements, future uses, budget needs and funding options. The Parish Council has agreed to the Strategy of “Balanced use of the land for the benefit of the local community and the environment with the aim to be at least self-funding within three years”.

COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT

The Parish Council precept - the proportion of the Council tax going to the Parish Council - for the current year ending 5th April 2024 is £98,500.

The Parish Council has submitted the proposal to increase this to cover three items: £19,000 of interest to be paid on the Public Works Loan, £5,500 to make up for the loss of the Grant for maintenance of the ‘open areas’ leased land from Waverley, and some £3,000 increase to contribute to rising costs (i.e. a 3% general increase).

While this represents an estimated 28% increase in the precept, our Parish precept will still be about average for households across Waverley Borough Council.

The loan interest is equivalent to £11 per annum increase on a band D property, and assumes drawdown a further £100,000 from the Loan Board in 2024, in preparation for the planned development of the Arbuthnot Hall in Shamley Green. While the 2024 drawdown interest rate will not be known until the date it is approved, we are targeting to keep within the £12-15 p.a band D target included in the consultation.

WONERSH ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY GROUP (WEAG)

WEAG now has over 50 volunteers!

We were lucky with the weather and hence only limited watering was required for the new planting over the summer. Volunteers have undertaken litter picking, ragwort removal (an exhausting and big job in the new fields), and continued to remove the old plastic green protectors from the woods up the Barnett Hill footpath. There are still about eight acres of these plastic protectors which are rotting, unsightly and in many cases strangling the growing trees. So do please volunteer for future days.

We advertise on the Parish website and Facebook pages, WEAG Facebook, Wonersh Past and Present Facebook, as well as using an A board outside the village shop.

Please contact clerk@wonershparish.org if you can sponsor a skip to help dispose of the green protectors to agri-recycle, and/or wish to join WEAG.

SHAMLEY GREEN ENVIRONMENT GROUP (SGEG)

In August, SGEG were one of the Community Groups invited by Surrey Wildlife Trust to celebratory evening at West Horsley Place. In September, we participated in the Great Big Litter Pick reducing the risk to wildlife and the local environment. Litter pickers and adult sized high-visibility vest are available from Wonersh Parish Council for such collective action. Following our October bulb planting, it is hoped that the upcoming swathes of crocus and narcissi will provide an early season source of pollen and nectar, as well as looking beautiful every spring.

We are pleased to share the report on water levels of the Shamley Green Duck Pond. We have welcomed the start made by the Parish Council contractor in enabling the vegetation around the ponds to be managed considerate of increasing biodiversity and local habitats. Shortly, the amount of silt entering the duck pond will be managed using a small natural pool up-ditch of the inlet, and reed mace will be removed from the Brickies pond which is being managed primarily for nature. We are looking forward to explaining the purpose of toad patrols through Guildford Environment Forum in January- results of ours are available via the SGEG website here. Anyone wanting to help us in 2024 please email: info@shamleygreenenvironment.co.uk.

We continue to inspect the local trees and feedback to local councils. We share lots of information about all our trees on our website (www.shamleygreenenvironment.co.uk/trees).



PLANTING TREES ON THE HIGHWAY/VERGE

Any resident or organisation within Surrey can apply to Surrey CC for trees to be planted outside their own property or on local areas of large highway verge. There is a £25 non-refundable fee for the application, to cover a single location up to 50m in length. This covers administrative tasks, including stats plans (showing underground utility equipment in the area) and a site suitability survey.

As part of the initial assessment of each application, they will confirm whether they are able to fund the tree planting, or if this will need to be funded privately.

If all the criteria are met, Surrey would intend to provide and plant the tree(s) using an approved Surrey County Council contractor. Applications are now open for trees to be planted in Autumn 2024.

Use the web link below to find out further details and apply for a tree or two for 2024:

www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/permits-and-licences/planting-trees

BLUE HEART SCHEME

Surrey County Council supports the Blue Campaign, in which residents are encouraged to:

- Identify suitable grass verges near where they live.
- Gain local resident support to rewild this area (especially people whose properties are directly in front of the proposed verge).
- Contact SCC to ensure this verge is suitable for being left uncut
 - Select 'Planting a blue heart on the verge' as the form option
 - Pinpoint the specific verge or green area on the map
 - Use the text box within the form to add any specific comments and let us know if you have gained local community support
- Obtain a blue heart to plant in the verge (the Parish Council may be able to let you have one).

If you wish to apply to look after your verge and join the Blue Heart scheme then apply through the website below:

<https://www9.surreycc.gov.uk/HighwayIssue/IssueInformation.aspx>

PARISH COUNCIL ALLOTMENTS

The allotments have been a hive of activity over the summer months with holders producing lots of beautiful vegetables and flowers. It's great that there is so much interest in the area to grow your own and all allotments are currently fully occupied. However vacancies do come up on occasions so if you are at all interested in having a full or half plot or maybe sharing a plot with an existing holder then please get your name on the waiting list. Contact the Parish Clerk: Clerk@wondershparish.org

DID YOU KNOW WE PROVIDE SMALL GRANTS TO GROUPS BENEFITTING OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?

Wondersh Parish Council welcomes and values the work of local voluntary groups and organisations. The Council has a policy for making grants to groups and organisations which contribute to the welfare of the community by improving or supporting facilities and/ or activities. Our Grant Awarding Policy and an application form can be found on our website: www.wondershparish.org/policies-and-procedures

BLACKHEATH UPDATE

Wonersh Parish Council continues to work with Waverley Borough Council, Surrey Highways and Blackheath village residents to prioritise Blackheath concerns, including the drainage ditches which have been cleaned out and jetted prior to the winter, reducing (so far) the persistent flooding at the bottom of the village. There are proposals to improve the drainage in the village to improve this further. Blackheath concerns with planning applications for the barn and old pavilion have been forwarded on to planning, and the situation continues to be monitored, as are the Waverley planning responses to the uncompleted redevelopment of the old Villagers public house.

The recent Thames Water outage that impacted Blackheath and other parts of the Parish has been escalated to other relevant levels of Government, noting in particular the lack of communication for the GU4 Postcode and to the village in particular

The Blackheath Village Society, Cricket Club and Village Hall society continue to organise events following from successful fair this year, including the successful Bonfire night at the Cricket Club and residents Christmas gathering at the Village Hall.

GARDEN CLOSE COMMUNITY ROOM, SHAMLEY GREEN

Two of the key developments led by Cllr Mike Band are the lease of the Garden Close Community Room in Shamley Green and the leases of common land in Wonersh and Shamley Green / Lords Hill, both from Waverley Borough Council. Negotiations on the leases and improvements of these amenities in advance of signing were completed for the community room earlier this year and will be completed imminently for the land.

Wonersh Parish Council took on the day to day management of aspects of these in 2020, including grounds maintenance of the open common land, with an updated mowing schedule to encourage biodiversity, and moving to an online system for community room bookings. Since finalising the lease of the Community Room we have provided WiFi and will soon be providing an electrical oven for hirers' to use. Our current hirers would love to welcome those wanting to join them or to find out more:

- The Shamley Green Women's Institute meet here from 2pm on the first Wednesday of the month. Contact Cherry le Grey, cherrylegray@yahoo.co.uk, 0777830828
- Sarah Henson of Artiikat provides a range of adult art classes, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday during term times. Sarah is a Royal Academy trained artist, her classes are small and friendly, with individual approaches encouraged, guidance is provided to support this. Contact Sarah artiikat@yahoo.co.uk, 07941036062
- Janet Williams teaches self-help techniques to balance energy to help release stress and relieve pain, allowing participants to work towards optimum health. She plans to run a wellness group in 2024 and everyone is welcome. Contact Janet: newhorizonsawakened@gmail.com, 07908522139.



Wonersh Parish Council welcomes new booking and you can find more details by calling the Clerk on 01483892601 or on our website here: www.wonershparish.org/room-bookings.

WONERSH PLAYGROUND UPDATE

The Playground Rejuvenation Working Party in Wonersh is led by Stephanie Staton-Young who has put a great deal of thought and hard work to achieving the recent makeover. She has led on informing the adjustments and changes which have been made to the new equipment to respond to parents' concerns and we have welcomed the positive feedback on this.

There is still one piece of equipment that will need replacing over the next year -The Junior Multiplay. This is reaching the end of its life due to rotting posts so we are fundraising for this now, so we can be prepared for its removal this time.

LORDS HILL PLAYGROUND UPDATE

The Playground Rejuvenation Working Party in Shamley Green is led by Kat Parkinson, who, alongside other local families, arranged a festive family fun day raising funds and awareness of the need for local investment at the playground on Lords Hill Common. Kat said:

"The family fun day was a roaring success. From singing with Monkey Music to crafting star decorations with Messy Church, the children had a great time. Face painting by our very own Chris Howard was such a success, that she stayed on for an extra half hour to make sure everyone had their run. The star of the show was undoubtedly Father Christmas who listened very patiently to extensive wish lists!

We hope everyone who attended enjoyed it as much as we did. We received some very generous donations during the event too and are incredibly grateful for the support that the local community has shown to us. We raised £3,000 and hope to arrange more events next year to continue our efforts to raise £40,000 and fund five new pieces of play equipment".

Donations for each playground can be made to:
The Wonersh and Shamley Green Voluntary Playground Committee, Reg charity 803625
Sort code: 08-92-99
Account Number: 65449512

Please state '**Wonersh**' or '**LordsHill**' when donating by BACS and if you are a tax payer then we may be able to reclaim the tax via gift aid. Please let us know.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Parish Council meet regularly for Full Council Meetings on the second Thursday of the month, except for August and December, upcoming dates are: 11th January, 8th February, 14th March 2024.

The Planning Committee meet every three weeks, on a Thursday morning, upcoming dates are: 14th December 2023, 4th & 25th January, 15th February, 7th & 28th March 2024.

Members of the public are very welcome to join us.

The Advisory Groups, meet regularly and welcome new members with expertise and interest in transport, environmental matter and playground improvements.

