

**BENSON PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
11 MAY 2017**

RECREATION & LANDS COMMITTEE REPORT

2016/2017 has proved to be both challenging and rewarding in terms of maintaining and improving the environment and parish-owned lands within Benson parish. The following briefly outlines those challenges, and the achievements of the Recreation and Lands committee during this period.

RECREATIONAL

The wooden multi-gym piece of equipment had to be removed from the Green Close play area during 2016, sadly, due to the wood becoming rotten and broken. As a result, the Council has taken the opportunity to replace, and add to, the play equipment in Green Close play area and also at St Helen's Avenue play area. The children at Benson CoE Primary School were consulted as to their favourite pieces, and a grant application is now under consideration at South Oxfordshire District Council. The items to be installed include a zip wire and a climbing frame.

Thanks are due once again to the Green Gym who have helped through the year (as in past years) with the maintenance of the Millbrook Mead, including the boardwalk. The boardwalk is currently being repaired in sections, the first section having been completed earlier this year. The next section is due to be repaired during the coming summer.

VILLAGE CENTRE

Parking continues to be a problem in the village centre, and the Parish Council continues to monitor the situation, whilst waiting for the Neighbourhood Plan, with its parish-approved options for parking and transport, to be published.

Many thanks are due to all those who give of their time to make our village flower tubs look so wonderful. Thanks are also due to Grundons for their continuing welcome donation of daffodil bulbs, as well as to Mrs Delia Carsberg for her continued planting and maintenance at the Millstream Toilet Block and a stretch of land along Church Road.

Thanks are once again due to Mr Peter Keble for his welcome donation of a Christmas tree, and to Mr Pete Eldridge (our former Parish Clerk) for continuing to organise much-needed village-wide litter-picks.

WAR MEMORIAL

Very sadly, the group of parishioners who have been faithfully and diligently looked after the planting around the War Memorial have decided that they can no longer do so. The Council's very sincere thanks go to all of them for their sterling work over many years.

ALLOTMENTS

There is currently a short waiting list for allotments. Work continues to make the entrances to both allotment sites easier and less of a muddy hazard.

PARISH: GENERAL

Dog fouling continues to be a problem for parishioners: despite the fact the vast majority of dog and walkers are hugely responsible and clean up after their dogs, there is a small number who persist in leaving behind their dogs' messes, making the environment extremely unpleasant for all. Parishioners may have seen pink spray being used to "high-light" this issue: the Parish Council has decided to try an unconventional method to encourage removal of all dog faeces.

Wallingford School Community Projects: students from Wallingford School have begun to re-paint the three bridges over the Benson Brook behind St Helens Way, as part of their giving back to the community. This should be completed in the next few weeks.

Rivermead: two new picnic tables/benches have been installed at Rivermead which the Council hopes many parishioners will take advantage of during the summer months. New accessible gates have been installed along the Thames Path at Rivermead and at the water meadow. Our sincere thanks to the National Trail Thames Path and to Mr Adrian Tilbury for their help in making this happen.

Post Office walkway: as many will know, the walkway between the parish hall car-park and the Pavilion (Post Office) is in need to repairs, due to shifting slabs. This is due to be done shortly.

Church Road benches: the two benches in Church Road have been replaced. The old ones were in need of replacement due to severe wear and tear, and the opportunity was taken to replace them with benches commemorating Queen Elizabeth's 90th birthday last year. This was enabled by a grant for a large proportion of the costs from South Oxfordshire District Council.

The Paddock: the Chiltern Society is kindly replacing the stiles at the Paddock, on St Helens Road allotments, with accessible kissing gates, and this is due to be done shortly.

THANKS

Finally, I would like to thank all Parish staff for their hard work, including our new Parish Clerk, Dianne Brooks, who has taken up the reins very ably since our last Clerk retired at the end of 2016. It is only due to them that the Parish Council, and all committees, can continue to do the work we do.

Lastly, my sincere thanks to all members of the Recreation and Lands Committee for their work and input to the committee's work during 2016/2017.