

Bletsoe

Gazette

2009

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Parish council

Gypsy and Travellers' Caravan Site

In January all members of the Council had to re-apply to The Standards Committee for a further 12 months dispensation so that they could continue to speak and vote on this matter. Following the appeal inquiry, the inspector granted 3 years temporary planning permission subject to numerous conditions. The Borough Council planning officers are making regular visits to the site to monitor progress and have invited Parish Council representatives to meet with them on a bi-monthly basis to discuss **any** matters of mutual concern. We will also be discussing progress towards the the Borough Council's allocation of sites for the 25 additional pitches that they are required to provide by 2011.

The New Unitary Council

On 1st April the County Council ceased to exist. Services which they provided became the responsibility of Bedford Borough Council. Inevitably the reorganisation has resulted in changes. However, representatives from every parish council may now attend a quarterly meeting with the borough officials to review progress and discuss problems. We are pleased that Jane Walker was re-elected as ward councillor as she has provided invaluable advice and support over several years.

Other Planning Items

The Parish Council's Planning Advisory Group have considered a number of applications for developments on the Twinwoods Wind Tunnel Site. A data centre has been approved by the Borough Council and plans for an extension to Bodyflight's activities and a recycling/gasification/incinerator plant are to go to the Planning Committee shortly. The Thurleigh Road entrance will become the main access to the site, which could result in more traffic through the village and we will be pressing for measures to be taken to prevent this

Recreation Facilities

Thanks to Paul Caves and helpers the multisport play area equipment was erected at the beginning of the summer holidays. Sufficient funding was available for a basket ball hoop at either end of the tarmac area, which will be lined out shortly. The gates and fences around the childrens' play area are in a poor state of repair and we hope that with the benefit of another grant they will be replaced soon.

Transport

After some initial teething problems the bus service operated by Cedar Coaches is running reasonably to time. However, if you are left stranded because a bus fails to arrive, please ring the Borough Council who will send a taxi. The contact number is on the timetable at the bus stop. We continue to press for a regular service to Sharnbrook.

At Last!

Despite numerous requests to the Highways Department nothing was done. Now, after more than two years, the new street lamp in Bennetts Close is working and the old post has been removed. Who said that miracles never happen!

Your parish councillors are:

Mike Grimes (Chairman) 781183

Edward Bean (Vice Chairman) 781372, Ann Binder 782362, Paul Caves 781812, Matt Cox 781917, Ann Gibbons 781161, Debbie Hall 783063

Clerk Malcolm (Bill) Rowland 781646

Mike Grimes

Diary of Events

- Sat 24 Oct.** Dance to “Hair of the Dog” **8pm village hall**
Tickets £10 from Barbara 781813
- Sat. 31 Oct** **Churchyard tidy up** 10am - 12 noon
- Sat 7 Nov.** **Bonfire, fireworks** and Hot Dogs
6.30 pm village playing field
(the field gate will be open over the two week-ends
before for contributions to the bonfire)
- Thur 12 Nov** **Friends of St Mary’s AGM** 8pm in the church
- Tues 1 Dec** **Concert with Cantamus** in the church
details later
- Sat 5 Dec.** **Church coffee morning** 10am – noon village hall
- Sat 12 Dec** **Christmas dance** with Roger Williams
7.30 for 8pm village hall
Tickets £12.50 from Barbara
- Sat 19 Dec** **Christmas family social**
6.30 pm village hall. Please notify Barbara a week in
advance of children under 11 years old who will be
attending
- Sun 20 Dec.** **Christmas carol service** 4pm
- Fri 25 Dec** **Christmas Day service** 9.30am
- Sun 27 Dec** **Joint service with Riseley** at All Saints Riseley

Regular Village Events

In the Village Hall

Whist Drive	7.30pm second Monday of each Month
Women's Institute	7.45pm second Tuesday of each month
Coffee morning	10.30 am second Thursday of each month
Bingo	7.30pm third Friday of each month
Young Farmers	7.30 pm every Wednesday
Parish Council	7.30 pm first Monday in each quarter

Further details from Barbara **tel. 781813**

In the Church of St. Mary's

Church service 9.30 am every Sunday
(This time is varied at Christmas, Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday)

The Village Hall

This year we have enjoyed entertainment from "Cockney Pride", "Fair Exchange", Tim Coppin, Dale Andrews and Craig Powell. All these events were very successful and the money raised has gone towards the new floors in the Hall. I would like to thank the Fete Committee for the generous donation, it's really appreciated as we would struggle without it. Also thanks to the Village Hall Committee members for all the work they put in to help with organising events and maintenance of the hall.

Maria Caves tel.781812

Planning: Gypsies & Travellers' site at 'Waiting for the Sun'

Readers will recall that in June 2008 Bedford Borough Council refused Mr Allen's planning application for change of use on part of the site, from agriculture to caravan site with 4 pitches (8 caravans), erection of two amenity blocks, hardstandings and landscaping.

Mr Allen lodged an appeal against that decision and a date was fixed for a full Public Inquiry in February 2009. The Bletsoe Residents Association (BRA), supported by the Parish Council, considered it essential that the village be represented at the Inquiry because the Borough's Planning Committee, in rejecting the application, had also rejected the recommendation of their then Head of Planning that it should be granted.

Both sides used planning consultants together with barristers to argue the case at the Inquiry itself. The total costs for BRA were likely to be significant, so during the autumn, winter and following spring, BRA set about fund-raising. The success of the campaign was due to the generosity of individuals, a series of well-attended fund-raising events at the Village Hall, and a significant sum from the reserves of the Parish Council.

Just before the Public Inquiry opened, Mr Allen and up to four caravans moved on to another part of the same site (all owned by his father who owns and runs another site in Irthlingborough) adjacent to back gardens on the west side of the Avenue. The Borough Council issued Enforcement Notices requiring that this unauthorised development cease.

The Public Inquiry was well attended by villagers, seven of whom made short statements. Two days proved insufficient, and two further day sessions were held in March and May. It was with great disappointment that the village learnt at the end of June that the Inspector had allowed the appeal, granting a **temporary** planning consent for **three years**. Her principal reason was the lack of available pitches for gypsies and travellers in the Borough of Bedford as a whole, and the lack of evidence that the Borough would provide the regionally required total of new pitches by the target date of 2011. However, she also made clear that the Bletsoe site was less suitable than others likely to be brought forward, and that the temporary permission should set no precedent for expansion or further renewal. She also imposed a demanding set of planning conditions intended to ensure the proper management of the site and protect the amenities of the village.

In the meantime, Mr Allen has appealed against the enforcement notices. A date for an informal hearing has been set for mid October 2009. Again, BRA will, at further cost, be represented by its planning consultants. It is clear from his pre-hearing statement that Mr Allen wants to exchange his temporary permission for a permanent permission on the site of his unauthorised development immediately adjacent to rear gardens of The Avenue. Pre-hearing statements from BRA and the Borough Council strongly opposed Mr Allen's appeal.

The late Mayor of Bedford attended a meeting at the Village Hall of the Parish Council in early July at which residents were able to express their concerns and frustrations at the speed at which the Borough was identifying and providing new sites. The Parish Council has arranged to have regular meetings with senior Borough Council officers in order to maintain pressure for the timely provision of these new sites and to monitor the setting up and use of the site at Bletsoe.

David Baker

Bletsoe Web Sites

It is less than ten years ago that we recorded information about Bletsoe for the Millennium. This survey shows that approximately 50% of the households in the village then owned a computer of one sort or another. I guess that only a small proportion of those PCs would have been connected to the internet or an e-mail facility. Today the situation is radically different and there are those in the village whose fingers seldom leave the keyboard. For readers who are not yet into this world I must now give some space to promote this rival media to “Bletsoe Gazette” and introduce you to the excellent “web sites” which have recently been developed to provide information about our village.

www.bletsoe.org.uk is the creation of Edward Bean (tel. 781372) and is seriously focussed on history. It gives details of the Bletsoe archive; a wonderful collection of photographs and documents dating back to 1570. It also features a diligently researched tribute to the Bletsoevians who gave their lives in the 1914-18 World War. There is a section recording various documents held by the parish clerk, (dry reading for most). Here also are reproduced for posterity back issues of the Bletsoe Gazette for the benefit of those wicked people who have put their paper copy into the recycling bin.

www.bletsoe.net is a more recent site promoted by Ann Gibbons (tel 781161) It has a more racy tabloid style and presents the village as it is now, emphasising the various organisations and the vitality of their activities. On this site will be found pictures of the egg and spoon race, the flower festival, the Battle of Britain fly past, the churchyard working party (some working), the potato growing competition, the serried ranks of Bletsoe WI and a rather exhausted entrant into the dog show.

I know that both Edward and Ann are keen to add suitable material to their sites and will welcome any contributions or suggestions that you may have

Editor

Friends of St Mary's

The past year, for the Friends Committee, has all been about grants and applications, making the most of the excellent village fundraising in support of the church building. We've had some splendid events with a great deal of support, especially from everyone concerned with the Fete and the Fete Committee and from all those who came to our various food, quiz and music nights. So thank you to all who have contributed to the fundraising as we aim to raise the money for our current programme of work.

The repairs to the west end wall, internal redecoration, electrical work and relaying the floors in the St John Chapel and the nave will take around £45,000 and so far we have £25,000 including a grant of £10,000 from the Beds & Herts Historic Churches Trust, the Wixamtree Trust and the Wren Trust. Meanwhile, the Friends have three grant applications to other bodies outstanding and these have to be considered before any work starts. So, although we could begin the work now, we would lose any opportunity for further grants if we didn't wait. However, we expect to know the outcome by Christmas.

St Mary's Church is in very good condition overall because of the past work of so many, especially over the past twenty years. However, it does sometimes feel like a never-ending task, not least when the five-yearly inspection takes place and the report tells us what work has to be done over the next five. That will happen in 2010, so by the time next year's Gazette comes round we'll know what is needed. We expect to have to repair the East window and we have our own list of tasks, so we'll wait and see what happens! In the meanwhile we will complete the current phase.

Thank you to all our supporters and helpers. Do come along to our next event and enjoy the evening whilst contributing to the ongoing care of Bletsoe's most important building.

Thank you.

Mike Gibbons



Footpaths and Bridle-ways

This article is mainly for the benefit of newcomers to the village or for those who have only recently taken up the pastime of horse riding or dog walking. Around the fields to the east, north and west of the village there is a network of “permissive” footpaths and bridle-ways, which are open for public use under an environmental scheme promoted by the government for a ten year period ending in October 2016. There is a map illustrating the various routes in the entrance lobby to the village hall and others on laminated boards at the various entry points. However, if anyone in the village would like a personal copy of this map to refer to, please telephone me and I shall be glad to supply one

Jonathan Knights tel. 782230

A Taste of the Past

The end of May saw a motley crowd descending upon the Village Hall for a Medieval Feast – ladies in silks & velvets, a king & a crone, maidens & monk, nuns and fine gentlemen. Never had the hall looked so good – Susie Custance had decked it with flowers & banners dug out of the recesses of the old chancel. Lighting was kept low & romantic. Forks not allowed because they hadn’t been invented. Edward Bean made a superbly pompous Chamberlain pontificating on Medieval Manners, followed by (the ever-so reverend) Pete Custance orating a Medieval Grace in Latin with due solemnity.

After a taster of Lyttle Mead the assembled company tried blancmaunger, a dish of chicken with rice & almonds, & a few delicacies such as real mince pies & Slubberkens (don’t ask!). A decorated Boar’s Head was carried in with proper ceremony, with the Boar’s Head Carol. Roast pork flavoured with Grains of Paradise & proper crackling flew out of the kitchen so fast that some of the cooks didn’t get any! (Sorry Alison, Gideon & David! And what a pity that Mick O’Connor, who supplied the meat for the feast, was not there to enjoy it!) The finale was a giant butterfly (a Soteltie) made of a special Medieval Cherry Cake & elaborate icing.

And the entertainment! Dishes were announced by trumpet. Chaucer (alias Peter Hetherington) welcomed the guests in true medieval style. Chaucer recited one of his most famous pieces – The Nun’s Tale – with Monica performing as a superb Madame Eglantyne, dressed just as a prioress should be, & complete with horrid miniature dog. Music was supplied by Les Skinner Esquire, who was brought back for an encore. And we were treated to a spontaneous song by visiting singers. Kester the Jester lived up to his reputation of being the very best – though Hi from the Old Rectory was lucky to leave with his – er – lunch basket??? – intact!

And a big thank you to the cooks Alison Bean, Shirley Dawson Andrew Fyvie and Chris Grimes for lovely fresh vegetables and rosewater cheesecakes. And to the Guests - we made a much needed £1400 for the repair & maintenance of Bletsoe’s lovely medieval church.

Evelyn Baker



CEDAR COACHES BUS SERVICE 152

As it provides travel from Bletsoe to and from Bedford

Mondays to Saturdays (except bank holidays)

	NS	
Bletsoe Church	08.5 5	10.1 2
Thurleigh Baptist Chapel	09.0 5	10.2 2
Ravensden Crossroads	09.1 1	10.2 8
Bedford, Harpur Street Outside the old telephone house	09.2 0	10.3 8

				SD	SHol	
Dame Alice School				16.10		
Bedford Harpur Street	11.15	13.15	14.15	16.15	16.15	17.45
Ravensden Crossroads	11.25	13.25	14.25	16.25	16.25	17.55
Thurleigh Chapel	11.31	13.31	14.31	16.31	16.31	18.01
Bletsoe Church	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR

SD operates on school days only **NS** Not Saturdays

SHol - Operates on Saturdays and school holidays

RR - These stops are served on request to the driver





No service on Sundays or Bank Holidays

Full information on the service 152 between St.Neots and Bedford will be found on the notice boards outside the School House and behind the telephone box opposite the church





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telephone (012334) 228337

First and third Wednesdays of the month

Riseley Five Bells	14.15		16.20	
Bletsoe Church	14.20		16.15	
Sainsbury's Supermarket Clapham Road	14.35		16.00	

Second Wednesday and third Tuesday of the month

Riseley Middle School	09.00 pre		13.26	
Riseley Five Bells	09.03 pre		13.23	
Bletsoe Church	09.09 pre		13.17 RR	
Sharnbrook Swan	09.16		13.10	

RR this stop is served on request to the driver

pre indicates for these stops a prior telephone booking must be made before 16.00 on the previous day

Fuller details of the Sharnbrook Villager minibus service, including routes from Bletsoe to St. Ives, Northampton and to Milton Keynes will be found on the notice board behind

A Gibbons' Family Affair

The Diamond Wedding of Peter and Betty

Even the Queen has recognised the achievement of being married for 60 years! Mum and Dad received a card, personally signed by her to add to their already large number of cards!!!!

It was a fantastic weekend altogether. It started off with close family members having a barbeque on the Saturday and the surprise of the afternoon was the arrival of the Canadian family members. Robert, his wife and four children had crossed the Atlantic for a three week holiday in the UK to coincide with our celebrations. Robert has not been here since the early eighties! His mother, Dad's sister, had sent them on her behalf to pass on her love to the happy couple!

It was almost like organising a wedding!!!! Catering, invites, decorations, drink and accommodation requests. Thanks to those friends who were kind enough to act as hosts to family members! Thanks also to Mike Grimes for his lovely gesture of the car - Mum and Dad looked so happy being driven down the Avenue and the little bouquet of flowers was a very thoughtful addition.

The Sunday began with the church service to which all friends and family were invited! The church was full and the sense of occasion was just brilliant! Martin, the Rector, was remarkable in his sermon and the large party popper! Mum and Dad were made the real centre of attraction! I had the sentimental joy of having my grandchildren help me with the collection - this was a real treat! The hymns had all been chosen by Mum and Dad and they were given a little surprise with the addition of their children singing a rather emotional moment for us all!



There was the walk down the church path to the beautifully decorated Austin vintage car and then the drive down the village! Cameras were flashing all over the place!

There was a short hiatus when everyone seemed to pour into Number 17 as the rain clouds came! However, it eased off and we were all able to get into the hall which was laid out for lunch - enjoyed by all - even the Devon farmers were complimentary - high praise indeed!! During the lunch everyone was given the opportunity to say a few words and the compliments were flowing - understanding, hospitable and always welcoming were a few of the adjectives used to describe this very special couple. Dad gave a wonderful speech about their life together and how he had never asked Mum to marry him but was doing as ordered by his future mother-in-law!!!! Even Mum said a few words of thanks to everyone. There was a third part to the day when other villagers joined the celebrations for afternoon tea and the wonderful cake, courtesy of Alison Bean, was cut and shared! Another speech and more compliments!

A terrific day and great recognition of a lovely couple!

Ann Gibbons

Countryside Commentary

It is late September as I write; the swallows, house martins and swifts have gone - hopefully to return mid – April next year.

Wasps, of which there have been plenty , are now less evident. What a shame such a beautiful beneficial insect should be disliked so much.

What a pleasure it has been this year to watch so many varieties of butterflies and moths. The much-heralded Painted Lady , coming all the way from the Atlas Mountains in North Africa, has been seen in abundance, particularly on the thistle flowers. Specially planted pollen and nectar areas really are paying off,

Time flies and again it is the season to think about planting new hedges and trees. The Bedford Borough Council Scheme is run for the benefit of parishes to enhance their areas. Trees and hedge plants are supplied free and the scheme is designed to be educational too. Children collect seeds and propagate them at various schools. The more the scheme is supported, the less likely it is to be cut financially.

Please contact me on 01234 781320 or 07979596913 to order your needs, preferably by October 31st

Erinaceus europaeus
(the *nom de plume* of Paul Forster)



Hedgehogs love piles of leaves. Check before you burn.

The Wheelbarrow Race 2009



“3, 2, 1 Go” Jane shouted! I lifted up the barrow which contained Millie and started to run up The Avenue. Half way to the first stop we had to slow as Millie had to adjust her position in the barrow! We continued and ran to the first stop: the clothes! There was a pile for each wheelbarrow strewn across the road. I pulled on the skirt and the hat then slipped the rubber gloves on and we started up again. Next came the apple bobbing; I hate water on my face so it wasn't my favourite part but I was successful just the same! We then moved on to the final challenge which was to eat a whole jam doughnut!!!! I managed to get half of it in

my mouth all at once and gave Millie the rest which was a surprise to my friends who were watching!! I got up to sprint us to the finish line. We ran to the sound of cheering with the thought of having to do it all again in the next heat!

Later at the barbeque which was held in the Memorial Garden we were voted the best dressed barrow for which we received a certificate. Our barrow was decorated with all recyclable material! We really enjoyed ourselves and have the certificate to remind us.

There were more competitors than last year and lots of people enjoyed a relaxing evening in the Memorial Garden with barbeques and picnics. Thanks to Jane and Tess for organising such a fun event and to our local policeman who closed The Avenue to traffic to allow the race to take place!

Sophie Ferriman

Bletsoe Country Fayre 2009

What a fantastic effort by the village this year - over £4000 taken on the day and an amazing £2600 being given to the Village Hall funds and the same to the Friends of St Mary for their work on the fabric of the church. The Committee and the two organisations owe a huge debt of gratitude to everyone for all the help and contributions.

We were fortunate again this year to have BBC Radio 2's Alan Dedicoat officially open the afternoon. He has been kind enough to do this for four years now and even manages to get Bletsoe several mentions on Radio 2!!!!

The afternoon was full of highlights not least the flypast by the Red Arrows who let the vapour go as they flew over the village field - what a sight! Mind if you blinked you might have missed them so The Battle of Britain was a real bonus and a huge spectacle of the afternoon - Jack Hawkins did us proud this year as the planes passed over the field three times - there was an almost haunting feel to their flight!

The dance display by DanceVybz was outstanding - it was great to see so many young people enjoying themselves with such slick routines. Grant Dudley brought a fabulous display of falcons, which created a lot of interest. Mike had another great year with his display of vintage cars and this being the 100th anniversary of the Austin made the afternoon extra special. Palmersport were generous again this year with their display car

and personnel in attendance. We are grateful to them for their continued sponsorship of the Country Fayre and to all our sponsors without whose help the Fayre would not be the financial success it is. Jane was responsible for the fantastic job of bringing in all the advertising. Paula did an amazing sales job on the Pimms which was a first this year and will not be a last! Sophie organised the dog show which attracted a large number of dogs of all shapes and sizes; she did this alongside being an outstanding treasurer! The children's races were enjoyed by lots of youngsters under the guidance of Jane! Evelyn worked so hard and produced a huge amount of cakes and sweets which made an absolutely stunning sight and sold to lots of very appreciative people! And there was so much more!!!

The day ended with a fish'n'chip supper in the village hall - it nearly didn't when the supplier reported that they had not received an official order!!!! A bit of a high stress moment was experienced!

Not every committee member has been mentioned but thank you to **all** amazing committee members for their hard work, their stamina, their fun, their ideas, their friendship and contribution to the great success of the Bletsoe Country Fayre 2009!

Ann Gibbons



Bletsoe Historical Miscellany – Part 2

Bletsoe Schooling

The Old School and School House are present-day reminders of the way children were at one time educated. Bletsoe National School was opened in 1840, but rudimentary education had been provided to children of the parish for many years before that date.

Parish responsibilities had grown over several centuries as the feudal system declined. Although the parish was not a governmental organisation, prior to 1840 it was generally responsible for any form of locally available education and reliant on local landowners for funding

There was certainly some early form of schooling in Bletsoe as one of the paid duties of the Parish Clerk was to provide basic schooling in the three-Rs - there are records of regular payments for this and other parish services. This poses the question as to where this 'schooling' and parish administration took place? The mildly surprising answer is the south transept of the church, which later (from 1884) housed the organ and is now used as the vestry.

Entry to this schoolroom was gained through an external doorway below the window on the south wall, which is clearly shown in early 19th century illustrations. It has since been blocked up, probably in the 1860's restoration, but traces can still be seen. As there was no other public room in the village, other than the public house, it was presumably also used as the Parish Clerk's office and for meetings of the Clergy, Churchwardens, Poor Law Guardians, and Parish Overseer. The schoolroom was probably separated from the main body of the church by a partition and doorway, and may have also been used at times as a vestry.

This accommodation was limited and not entirely suited to education. With the support of the rector and philanthropic landowners the Bletsoe National School was built in 1840 to provide basic education to children of the parish as well as serving as a 'Reading Room' for adults, and as a public meeting place. The site of Bletsoe's National School had previously been occupied until about 1820 by cottages administered by the churchwardens for the poor and destitute of the parish. These cottages fell into disuse and were demolished after Bletsoe joined the Bedford

Workhouse Union, and the site passed into the hands of Lord St John, who subsequently gifted the land for the construction of a school and schoolhouse.

The National Society, which helped to fund the construction of the school at Bletsoe and the provision of books, had been established in 1811 with the aim of founding a Church school in every parish in England and Wales. By offering grants to prospective founders, on condition that development was fostered on chosen lines, the Society funded the construction, enlargement, and furnishing of schoolrooms..

Schooling was not free, the basic weekly fee being one (old) penny, with discounts dependent upon the number of siblings in simultaneous attendance. Much of the funding came from a parish levy on the landowners and farmers.



James Tabor Green, Bletsoe schoolmaster 1866 – 1892, and his wife Sarah.

In 1866 James Tabor Green, who had previously been schoolmaster at Melchbourne, was appointed as teacher at Bletsoe school, with his wife Sarah to assist him. Although educated people, with teacher training still in its infancy, neither were qualified teachers.

From 1870, every year Her Majesty's Inspectors visited each school to test pupils in reading, writing and arithmetic, and assess the level of grant due to the school. The local adoption of the 1870 Education Act and the formation of a school board may have formed the background to the removal in 1892 of Green and his wife and their replacement by qualified teachers.



Bletsoe School Group 1898

By 1880, school attendance had become compulsory for all children between 5 and 10 years of age. The leaving-age was gradually increased — to 11 in 1893, to 12 following the 1902 Education Act, which abolished School Boards and replaced them with Local Education Authorities, then to 14 in 1918 under the Fisher Act. The 1944 Education Act raised the school leaving age to 15, and divided schools into primary and secondary. Up until then, the village school had to cater for all ages from 5 to 14.

Bletsoe School closed on 20th July 1962, children subsequently being bussed to other schools in Riseley, Milton Ernest, and Sharnbrook. Ownership of the site reverted to Lord St. John when its educational use had ceased, and despite some attempts to purchase it for use as a village hall, the building stood derelict for a number of years before being sold for development as a private house

Edward Bean

Borough Council News

Thank you

Thank-you to everyone who voted this year for me to continue as your councillor. I am extremely grateful to you all for your continuing support.

Borough Council Unitary

On April 1st the Borough Council became a unitary council, which meant that it took over all services previously run by the County Council, including education, social services, early years provision, the youth service, waste disposal, and highways. The Borough now also runs archives, trading standards and libraries alongside their original services of planning, waste collection, leisure centres and parks. Once all of these services are properly integrated it should be much easier for local residents who want to contact the Council. There will eventually be only one place to contact and clear accountability.

Due to my experience with children and young people's services, the late mayor, Frank Branston, asked me to join him on his executive to take overall responsibility for the services to children and families, provided by both the Council and our partners such as police and health.

This portfolio includes education, and one of my major roles so far has been in co-ordinating and overseeing the consultation on schools organisation. A decision on whether the Borough would be staying with the three-tier system of education would have been made by the end of September. However, following the death of the Mayor, this and other major decisions have been put on hold until after 15th October when a new mayor will be elected.

Boundary Commission

The Boundary Commission is currently working with the Borough Council to review the wards that make up the Unitary Council. These are the areas represented by each councillor. Bletsoe is currently in the Clapham Ward which also includes Thurleigh, Milton Ernest and Clapham. Presently the Borough wards are highly unbalanced. I represent 4,000 electors whilst other wards vary from 2,000 up to 6,000. The Boundary Commission would like to know about traditional links that exist between villages. If you feel that Bletsoe has been linked with another village because of church or social ties for instance, the Boundary Commission would like to hear from you. Such opinions will be weighed when considering boundary changes to equalise the ward sizes. Once the review is complete, councillors will be elected to the new wards in May 2011.

You can find further details on the Borough Council web-site at www.bedford.gov.uk. The review will not affect parliamentary boundaries.

Contact details

If you have anything you would like to discuss with me or any problem that I can help with, please contact me on 07952 879587 or email me on jane.walker@bedford.gov.uk. I also attend every parish council meeting so you can speak to me in person there.

Jane Walker

R P TESTA

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