

PARISH COUNCILLOR PROFILE: SUE FOWLER



I joined the Parish Council in early 2012 after I'd been involved in pulling together the Local List of buildings and features we wanted to protect in the village, and also in persuading Network Rail not to put the Signal Box (which had been a village landmark for 135 years) in a skip. At the time there was a vacancy on the Council, and I was 'persuaded' to join. To be honest, I hadn't really known

what the Parish Council was about before then, despite having lived here for nearly 30 years. However, on the basis that it was apolitical, and focussed on issues which would affect or benefit our community, I hoped that I could add some value. It's been an interesting and surprisingly busy three years, especially as the 'localism' concept has developed in the meantime. I've been surprised (and somewhat frustrated) at how limited the Parish Council

are. It seems that we can organise cutting the grass and picking up the litter, but even these apparently simple tasks prove themselves astonishingly complicated to work out!

That's why we're working to develop a Neighbourhood Plan – we're hoping to put a few stakes in the ground to take some control in how and when our villages develop, hoping that we can work together with Wyre Forest DC to make sure

that we preserve the rural nature and community spirit of Churchill and Blakedown, which is what attracts so many of us to live here.

I've finally retired from my work in Human Resources for GKN, and a few years of business consultancy, so I've got some time to be more involved in the village again. It's a great place to live!

Oh, and I'm still hoping we can get the funds together to rebuild the Signal Box – can't stop until we've done that!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Parish Council will meet at 7.30pm on **Wed 15th April, Wed 20th May and Wed 17th June** in the Sports Pavilion. At the May meeting all the newly elected Councillors will sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, after which they will be permitted to act as Councillors, and the new Chairman will be elected. The **Annual Parish Meeting** takes place at 7.00pm on Wed 22nd April at Blakedown Primary School. Paul Allen from Wyre

Forest DC will talk about Hurcott Woods, and there'll be an informal consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan—see p2 for more details on this. You are warmly invited to attend all of these meetings. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions please contact the PC Clerk Angela Preece, 24 Holmes Orchard, Alveley, Shropshire, WV15 6 NX Tel 01746 781171 or 07572 108924 churchillandblakedownclerk@gmail.com

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MAY 7th 2015: YOUR PARISH COUNCIL NEEDS YOU!

It's unlikely you've missed the fact that 'parish precept', money collected through we're fast headed for an Election on the council tax. It's responsible for delivering some local services such as litter Thursday 7th May. In our area, not only are we electing an MP to represent us in picking, grass mowing and street lighting.

Parliament, but we're also electing District and Parish Councillors. In Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council, all nine seats are up for election; six seats in Blakedown and three seats in Churchill.

Please make sure you use your votes to select the people you would like to represent you at all these levels!

A number of existing Parish Councillors have decided to retire, and the PC is keen to attract new people with ideas and enthusiasm to stand as candidates.

If you would like to improve the quality of life for people living in our villages, and give the local community a voice, then your PC most definitely needs you!

The Parish Council meets once a month and makes decisions on how to spend the



Additionally the Parish Council is able to represent local people's views on planning issues.

Parish Councillors are not paid for their work, but they do receive excellent support and training, and the chance to make a real difference to the quality of life in the parish.

To stand as a Parish Councillor you need to complete a Nomination

Form (obtainable from the PC Clerk - see p4 for contact details) and return it by Thursday 9th April. You don't need to be connected to a political party but you must be 18 or over and live inside or within three miles of the parish boundary, or work within the parish.

REMEMBER TO USE YOUR VOTES ON THURSDAY 7TH MAY!

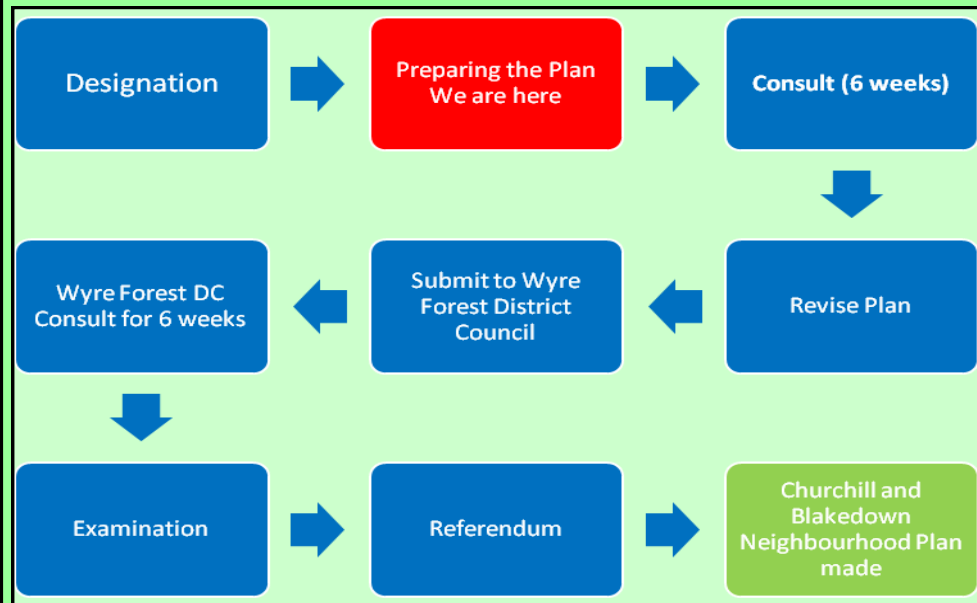
HAVE YOUR SAY AS THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN MOVES ON

The Parish Council continues to make progress on the Churchill and Blakedown Neighbourhood Plan. It's an important step for the Parish, according to Parish Cllr Jim Long:

“The Neighbourhood Plan is going to mean that planning policies and other local government activities will have to give far more consideration to the wishes of local residents than they have previously. In future, both County and District Councils will be obliged take into account the policy document which will eventually be produced, and which will map out policies that are valid until 2031. It largely incorporates the Parish Plan of 2009, and has legal status.”

All of this means the PC must follow a set procedure that will culminate when Wyre Forest adopts the Plan in 2016.

The chart below shows the different steps. To check whether things are proceeding along the right lines the PC is distributing an informal consultation questionnaire with this edition of Churchill and Blakedown News. Do complete the form with your responses to the questions relating to the seven proposed objectives of the Plan. You can hand it in or complete it at the Annual Parish meeting on Wednesday 22nd April at 7pm in Blakedown School. During the evening there'll be an update on the Plan and a Q&A session with Parish Councillors to help you decide. There will also be special post-boxes in Crumbs, The Swan and The Old House at Home, or you can post it to the Clerk (Address details are on p4.)



SITTING PRETTY IN CHURCHILL AND BLAKEDOWN



A major overhaul of the benches owned by the Parish Council is underway. PC handyman Mark Jones is currently renovating and re-varnishing the benches and says the work was well overdue:

“Many of the benches were in a fairly shabby state. In some cases, planks were missing or broken, and the benches weren't usable in any way. It's a pleasure bringing them back into service, and eventually I'll work my way round all eight of them.”

Mark is pictured putting the finishing touches to the bench near Churchill Farm, which also now boasts a brand new plaque with the Parish Council's name on it. He's also completed work on the bench situated on Blakedown village green, and has already noticed this is now getting far more use as a result. As part of his improvement plans, Mark will be planting flowers beside the benches to give a lovely display throughout the summer months.

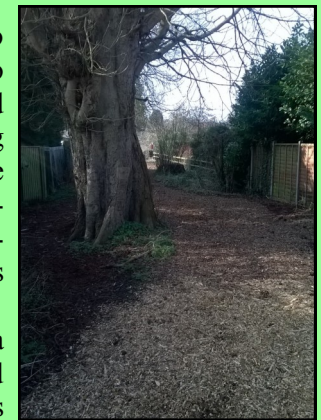
THE AVENUE IS LOOKING VERY CHIPPER!

Things have taken a definite turn for the better in The Avenue after the Parish Council arranged with Wyre Forest District Council for bark chip-



pings to be laid here to make it a better place to walk. The surface had suffered greatly following a number of successive wet winters. Wyre Forest's Arboricultural Technician Warren Davies says,

“We are pleased that a good use has been found for some of our surplus bark chippings, and that improving The Avenue has benefited the community in a simple and sustainable way”.



The 'before' and 'after' photos here show what a difference the chippings have made.