



Chesham Bois Parish Council

Annual Review 2018/19

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this Review of Parish Council Activity for the year to April 2019. Our aim is to show you how your contribution to the Council precept has been spent over the last year, and to highlight what has been achieved in each area of activity.

The Council is made up of 11 Councillors, who are committed to maintaining and improving life in the village, and a Clerk who ensures that the Council complies with its statutory duties. Those Councillors responsible for each area of activity have written a summary for the year; further details of activities can be found on our website or, you could follow our Facebook page or, sign up for twitter alerts to ensure that you are notified of events in the village.

Last year the council had an income of about £132k. Over half of this is from the Parish Council Precept, which forms part of the Council Tax paid by you, but around £44k is generated by the burial ground and the balance from Licences, Devolution and Fete income. In the year, the Parish Council spent around £110k which can be allocated as follows:

Office and Staff Costs amount to £29k. Councillors themselves are not paid.

We run a small office and this costs around £8k.

The Council maintains 18 hectares of local forest and Common land and this costs around £29k to maintain.

We have a legal obligation to provide and look after a burial ground, this costs around £21k.

The Council looks after the streets lights in the village and provides some speed signs to help slow traffic. This costs around £9k.

We spent around £4k on several events such as the Village Fete, Christmas Carols, a Picnic on the Common, Litter Picks and local communications.

The difference between our income and expenditure is transferred to reserves, which are used to cover longer term liabilities and unexpected events. We were also able to award £1000 in grants to local charities, resulting from the surplus from the Village Fete.

As a result of further pressure on Bucks County Council services, we anticipate a greater level of devolution to Parish Councils - this increase in the level of services that we provide will have to be funded by increased Precept.

Cathy Woolveridge – Chairman

COMMON AND WOODLANDS

The Parish Council owns Chesham Bois Common and a portion of Bois Wood and also looks after a further portion of Bois Wood and Tenterden Spinney on long leases from The Woodland Trust.

Our main focus over the past year has been on getting our 10-year Management Plan for the Woodlands through a strict Forestry Commission approval process and we were successful in March 2019. This means that the Council has the ability to start sustainable management of the woodlands to improve their long-term health and social and environmental value. We aim to improve the resilience of the woodlands by diversifying the age and species structure; this will involve selective felling of poor or overcrowded trees to allow more light to encourage regeneration of young trees, and in some areas we will be replanting new native trees as replacements. We want to increase biodiversity and protect wildlife, while at the same time improving the woodlands for public

recreation. The Chilterns are already threatened with ash dieback disease and some has been found on the Common already, so we must monitor and manage the health of our trees very carefully, otherwise a larger number may be lost. In addition, we are already trying to control invasive species such as laurel and holly in our woods. Our aim is to start implementation of Year 1 of the 10-Year Plan in late September 2019. The full plan is available on the Council website.

A primary concern of the Council is woodland safety, so we have carried out a number of safety surveys during the year and this has resulted in the need to fell a number of trees in areas such as Manor Drive, Tenterden Spinney and Chestnut Lane. In some cases new trees have been planted as replacements. With some high winds during the winter, we had some emergency tree work to cope with, not least a fallen beech blocking Bois Lane, an oak branch across North Road and a fallen cherry across the main Chesham Road. It is expensive work dealing with one problem tree at a time and we have had to overspend on our budget in

this area.

The Common has a particular aesthetic appeal and we have continued to invest in improved maintenance, for example, replacing missing or rotten wooden posts along the road edges to prevent encroachment and trimming the overhanging trees around the cricket pitch. The pond now has a regular maintenance regime in place and we have commissioned a new log seat

adjacent to it to replace the rotten one. Two extra dog waste bins have been installed in the parish and the Council funds the additional charges for clearing them. Fly tipping is a potentially growing problem and we have had to remind a number of properties backing onto the Common or rights-of-way that they can't dispose of garden waste just over the fence.



TRANSPORT, LIGHTING & HIGHWAYS

The Parish Council aims to represent the views of residents about roads and transport matters to Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) and others. We do this by having regular meetings with BCC officers and through membership of the Amersham Local Area Forum (LAF) and Transport for Bucks Forum. The Parish Council's prime role for roads and transport is as a statutory consultee for documents issued by BCC,



Central Government, and Chiltern District Council (CDC).

BCC is responsible for all the roads and pavements in Chesham Bois, (and surrounding areas), except where signs designate them as private roads or paths. More detailed information is available at www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/transport-and-roads. Problems and defects with roads and pavements can be reported direct to BCC. This is best done, via the FixMyStreet website www.fixmystreet.buckscc.gov.uk

Chiltern District Council (CDC) is responsible for providing and managing the "off street" car parks in the District, and for the cleaning and sweeping of all the roads and pavements in the Parish.

The Parish Council's direct responsibilities include all street lighting in the Parish, except for those lights on the A416 and the 2 lights on the Zebra Crossing in Bois Lane which BCC provided and maintains. During the past 3 years c£50,000 has been spent upgrading the majority of street lights to LED; the last 3 will be upgraded in 2019.

Also, in response to demand from a majority of residents, 2 new street lights have been installed in Milton Lawns.

The Parish Council has participated in the BCC devolved services scheme since 2016 and receives funding of £2,734pa for grass cutting, weed control, footpath and rights of way siding out and street furniture cleaning and maintenance. This scheme has worked well having given the Council the flexibility to respond quickly to local needs. Grass verges are now cut 12 times per annum and our contract is with Tool Shed, a social enterprise group that aims to give young people a first start in their working life.

The Council has responded to residents' concerns about speeding on our roads and has invested £14,000 in purchasing 5 electronic speed monitoring signs since 2016. Chesham Bois is approximately one square mile and we have established that there are about 6 million vehicle movements per year on our roads. Amersham Road (travelling from Chesham to Amersham) and Copperkins Lane (travelling from Hyde

Heath to Amersham) have been identified as showing the least compliance with speed limits. All data is shared with the police and they have agreed to conduct enforcement activity in these areas during 2019. We would also like to set up a Community Speed Watch Programme in the area and full training is provided by the police. We have the necessary speed monitoring equipment and just need willing volunteers so if you're interested please let us know.

Commuter parking is becoming an increasing problem in the village and this was discussed at length at the March Local Area Forum. Funding is being accrued to enable a parking study to be conducted in the Amersham and Chesham Bois area in 2020. In the meantime, we have lobbied TfB and hope to have some yellow lines added to junctions that are impacted by inconsiderate parking.

BURIAL GROUND

The Burial Ground, with its adjoining chalk grassland meadow, is a valuable asset for Chesham Bois. It offers formal and natural burials for both residents and those living outside the parish, in a stunning rural setting. It also provides a significant income stream



for Chesham Bois Parish Council.

Market research, carried out in early 2018 with local funeral directors and other service users, showed that there was limited awareness of the Burial Ground and the services it offered amongst residents, with some funeral directors citing previous ground maintenance issues.

The aims this year have therefore been to continue the programme of improvements to the Burial Ground and its environment, and to increase awareness of residents and the wider community.

The contractors for the Burial Ground maintenance were changed, with a new schedule of work set including more attention paid to the hedges in the formal burial areas. The Chapel was repaired and redecorated. The Garden of Remembrance was replanted, the toilet block was screened, and an access path laid from outside the Chapel towards the New Formal burial ground. A new information board showing a map of the grounds has been installed, together with a holder for the new Visitor Guides at the entrance. Benches have been repaired or replaced, and a new rustic bench has been installed in the Woodland Burial Ground. The Burial Ground includes four Commonwealth War Graves, and this has been recognised with an official plaque from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Finally, a new direction sign was installed near Chesham Bois school, to help visitors find the somewhat hidden entrance, as well as to raise awareness of the Burial Ground itself.

VILLAGE EVENTS

The Parish Council organises a number of events throughout the year to bring the village community together and to foster a supportive and friendly environment for everyone living here. Full details of future events can be found on our website, with dates listed on the back page of the Review.

Our biggest event is the summer fete, which is held every two years, on the Common along North Road. This is a very popular occasion, featuring music, entertainment, vintage cars and a wide assortment of stalls, selling food, drink and local crafts and we are often lucky enough to get an RAF flypast (a Spitfire, last year). The provisional date for the 2020 fete is Saturday 6th June.

An informal village picnic was inaugurated in 2017 to bring more people together to enjoy the Common and woodland, which give Chesham Bois its special character. Residents are invited to attend with their picnics and we provide music – although we can't guarantee the weather! This year's picnic will be held on 13th July and all are welcome.

To ensure that everyone can enjoy the village and to keep it clean and tidy we organise a Spring and Autumn Common Clear Up. Local residents, school children, youth groups and, of course, Parish Councillors, gather at the War Memorial before walking round the Parish picking up litter. The Council provides all equipment, Certificates of Participation, and a cup of coffee or a well-deserved treat at the end for all volunteers. This year we took part in the Great British Spring Clean on the 23rd March and even received a mention in the national press.

Another annual event, with a long tradition is 'Beating the Bounds' on Rogation Sunday. The purpose of the exercise was to acquaint everyone with the boundaries of the Parish by walking them. It is a friendly group of all ages accompanied by several dogs and a delicious afternoon tea is provided, after the 5 mile ramble, in the Parish Centre.

The Parish Council is currently developing a new village walk and map, with local points of interest, which will shortly be available for anyone to download. A group will be walking this as part of the Chiltern Walking Festival on Saturday 18th May meeting at the

Parish Centre – see our website for details of timing.

Chesham Bois Remembrance Day Parade is a key event in village life when Servicemen and women who lost their lives in war time are remembered by residents. Following a service at St Leonard's Church, the parade is led by the Chesham All Girls Band, and includes veterans, local organisations and youth groups, who march up Bois Lane to the War Memorial for the laying of wreaths and the minute silence. To mark the 100-year anniversary, last year, a bugler from the Amersham Band played the last post at sunrise and sunset.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed and helped us run events in 2018/19. If you would like to assist with future events, please contact us.



In the meantime, the Council commissioned a marketing consultant to draw up a new illustrated information brochure, that could be sent to those interested in purchasing or reserving a plot and could also be stocked by local funeral directors. The



project also resulted in a distinctive logo for the Burial Ground, a bespoke location map, a revised text ensuring search engine optimisation to be used on the Council website, and several different formats of advert for both print and electronic media. Adverts have been placed in Your Amersham and Your Chesham, and a variety of other publications aimed at increasing local awareness. Increased income from plot purchases this year, subsequent to the marketing exercise, has already covered its cost. In order to raise awareness and share all the improvements made, the Burial Ground held an open day on the 8th September to coincide with the National Heritage Open Day scheme. This included a Service of Remembrance and guided walks around the Burial Ground and Meadow. The event proved successful, with over 120 visitors.

The rare grass chalkland meadow has also been maintained, and the Chiltern Rangers have been commissioned to assist with future maintenance to help preserve the distinctive mix of plants. An invertebrate survey in July recorded up to 176 species, including some rare spiders and moths. We are hoping to promote the Meadow and its diverse wildlife as a village amenity. A small corner of the meadow has been leased to the Chalfonts Beekeepers' Society for their hives.

The Council is working on developing a digital map of the Burial Ground and making the appropriate changes to the digital record and administrative systems.

PLANNING

The Planning Committee is delegated by the Council to comment on any planning application within the Parish, and to submit those comments to Chiltern District Council (CDC). As a Parish Council, we are only a Statutory Consultee on planning matters, and we do not make the final decision on any planning application. Our role is to represent local views and provide local

knowledge to CDC, as such we are supportive of steps to share information and raise awareness of any planning applications.

How do we form a view on any planning application? Depending on the size of the proposal, residents will be affected differently thus we often have to balance opposing opinions expressed by local residents within the

context of valid land use and planning grounds. The weight to be attached to any representation depends on the significance of the impacts and on the number of residents affected by those impacts. For example, a proposal might be resisted by a small number of residents in the immediate locality, but this needs to be balanced against potential benefits (but

perhaps more modest) across a larger number of residents. The Planning Committee therefore welcomes receiving representations directly, so that we can be made aware of all the relevant issues. Residents affected by planning applications should always submit any representations to the CDC directly, as they are the decision maker.

PARISH CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT NEWS

St Leonard's Church, which owns the Parish Centre, is at the early stages of planning a significant redevelopment of the Parish Centre site, including a new building that will offer café, nursery, and meeting facilities, as well as a new worship space for the congregation that currently meets at the Beacon School. The latest plans are now available to view online on the Church website: www.stleonardscb.org.uk/parishcentreredevelopment where there is also a form to sign up to the St Leonard's

Church mailing list to be informed of future progress.

We would encourage all Chesham Bois residents to engage with this consultation process and make sure that their needs, aspirations and concerns can be taken into account. The Church project team can be contacted with comments and queries on pcredevelopment@stleonardscb.org.uk.

Chesham Bois Parish Council is also interested in the views of all residents. Please email the Clerk.

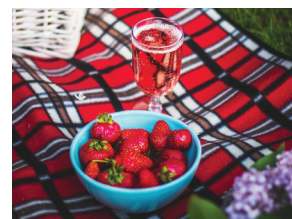
UPCOMING EVENTS

10am Saturday, 18th May – Village Walk

8pm Monday, 20th May – Annual Parish Meeting

2pm Sunday, 9th June – Beating the Bounds walk

4pm Saturday, 13 July – Picnic on the Common



This is a brief explanation of who does what:

CHESHAM BOIS PARISH COUNCIL

- Ownership and management of lands including The Common and Tenderden Spinney.
- Managing and maintaining the burial grounds within Chesham Bois.
- Maintenance of highway verges on behalf of Bucks County Council.
- Ownership and maintenance of streetlighting on minor roads.
- Reviewing and commenting on planning applications.

BUCKS COUNTY COUNCIL

- Education
- Fire
- Highways - maintenance, traffic management and lighting
- Libraries
- Recreation, Arts and Museums
- Social Services
- Strategic Planning
- Trading Standards
- Transport
- Waste Disposal



CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL

- Collection of Council tax and rates
- Environmental Health
- Local Plans
- Planning Applications
- Public Conveniences
- Tourism
- Car Parks
- Waste Collection, Recycling

HOW TO CONTACT US:

Email: clerk@cheshamboispc.org.uk
Telephone: 01494 432585

The Parish Office is open to the public
Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am – 2pm

FOLLOW US:

Twitter: @CheshamBoisPari

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CheshamBoisPC
www.cheshamboispc.org.uk