

PLANNING

The CBPC planning committee is formed by the CBPC to decide any formal response made on behalf of CBPC on any planning application within the parish council area to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), in this case Buckinghamshire Council.

As a Parish Council, CBPC is only a Statutory Consultee on planning matters within the Unitary Council area and CBPC do not make the decision on any planning application.

The role of CBPC in planning matters is to represent local views and provide local knowledge to the LPA. CBPC is supportive of steps to share information and raise awareness of any planning applications.

How do CBPC form a view on any planning application? Given their role in representing the views of residents in the Parish, CBPC often have to balance opposing opinions expressed by local residents. It requires careful balancing and any decision formed by CBPC needs to be based on valid land use 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 result in substantial local harm affecting a small number of residents, but this needs to be balanced against wider benefits (but perhaps more modest) across a larger number of residents. CBPC therefore welcome receiving representations directly,

so that CBPC can be made aware of all the relevant issues, although residents will need to submit any representations to the LPA in their own right, who are the decision maker.

Recently, the CBPC had to determine their response to proposals for the re-development of the parish centre. It was determined that, whilst the principle of providing new facilities on the site was to be supported, there was simply too much development proposed within that application, which would lead to unacceptable impacts and harm to the Conservation Area and the amenity of nearby residents. The application is yet to be heard and decided by the LPA but the CBPC have lodged an objection

recommending that the application be refused as submitted.

A defibrillator was installed on the wall of the Parish Centre in February.

We thank the London Hearts charity for their contribution to the cost of the defibrillator.



Chesham Bois Parish Council

Annual Review 2019 / 20

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this Review of Parish Council Activity for the year to April 2020. 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 but further details of Council activities can be found on our website www.cbpc.gov.uk 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 £128k (last year: £132k). CBPC derives income from the Burial Ground, grants and the Precept, and on alternate years, the fete. The Precept accounted for 60% of income in the year.

During the year, the Parish Council spent £138k; this was allocated as follows:

- The Council employs part time staff and spends around £27k on employment costs. Councillors themselves are not paid.
- We run a small office and this cost around £7k.
- The Council owns and looks after 18 hectares of local woodland. In 19/20, the Council spent £60k on common and woodland maintenance of which £15k was allocated from the Woodland Management Plan Reserves for work in Great Bois Wood and Tenterden Spinney.
- We have a legal obligation to provide and look after a burial ground; this year, we spent £19k on maintenance.
- The Council looks after the streets lights in the village and provides some speed signs to help slow traffic. This Council spent £18k in the year, of which £6k was allocated from

COMMON AND WOODLANDS

The Parish Council owns Chesham Bois Common and a portion of Bois Wood and it also looks after a further portion of Bois Wood and Tenterden Spinney on long leases from The Woodland Trust. Our 10-Year Management Plan for the sustainable management of these areas was agreed by the Forestry Commission and Chiltern District Council in March 2019 and we started work in September (avoiding the nesting season for birds). About 40 poor specimens of trees were felled in one section of Tenterden Spinney, leaving some good "halo" trees with more space and we obtained a free pack of some 140 small saplings from the Woodland Trust for replanting. This was due to take place in late March 2020 but has had to be postponed until November because of the restrictions in place for coronavirus. The area of Bois Wood near the burial ground had generally been left for a number of years so the age and condition of most

trees necessitated greater intervention – some 130 trees were felled. The licence from the FC specifies the density and species mix for replanting with emphasis on resilience and native broad-leaved trees from the Chilterns and we will be replanting over 450 saplings this Autumn, a mixture of small-leaved lime, silver birch, wild cherry, hornbeam, field maple and sycamore. In the long term this increase in diversity and a younger age structure will result in a healthier woodland which will be able to support an increase in biodiversity. A comprehensive safety check of all our trees alongside roads, paths and property was undertaken in September, which resulted in considerable work. Add to that a stormy winter that resulted in the Council dealing with a greater than normal number of fallen or dangerous trees, this has meant that emergency tree work has cost over budget. Some replacement trees have been planted, for example at the junction of Chestnut Lane and Sycamore Road. The Common is a great asset to the parish as public open space

and we continue to refine our maintenance regime to keep it looking good. The Chiltern Society volunteers continue to help us with clearance of invasive species like laurel. Pond maintenance is scheduled for three times a year, a heron is a regular visitor, and a new log seat by the pond, the work of a local chainsaw carver, has been installed.

Burial Ground

The grassland meadow adjacent to the Woodland Burial Ground has been designated a Local Wildlife Site by Bucks Council and we are being advised by

the wildlife surveyor on the best way to manage it to improve biodiversity. The Chiltern Rangers undertook some improvement work last year with help from a grant from the Natural Environment Partnership – they cleared some scrub and introduced scalloped edges at the woodland fringes – and we are now only cutting a third of the grassland each year in rotation. Ash dieback was discovered in trees by the Chapel and they had to be removed; however, this has opened up the entrance area and we are aiming to improve the landscaping here.



This brief explanation of who does what and how you can access services outside our responsibility:

CHESHAM BOIS PARISH COUNCIL

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

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL

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

TRANSPORT & LIGHTING

During the period April 2019 to March 2020, the Parish Council represented the views of residents about roads and transport matters to Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) and others. We did 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).

A new structure of local government in Buckinghamshire was introduced on 1st April 2020; BCC is now known as Bucks Council (BC); Chiltern District Council was disbanded on 31 March 2020 and LAF's were disbanded on 31 December 2019.

New Community Boards were formed to focus on local matters and its first meeting was held on 16 July 2020. BC is responsible for all the roads and pavements in Chesham Bois, (and surrounding areas), except where signs designate them as private roads or paths. BC discharges all its roads and transport responsibilities through a joint venture company with Ringway Jacobs called Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB).

Bucks County's responsibilities include:

- Providing new facilities, maintaining roads and pavements and co-ordinating the activities of all the organisations that dig holes in our roads and pavements.
- Managing all "on street parking" and employs the parking enforcement attendants.
- Responsibilities for the provision and coordination of all bus services in the area, including schools transport.
- Managing council owned 'off street' car parks
- Cleaning and sweeping of all roads in the Parish

More detailed information is available at: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-transport/> 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

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 BC provided and maintains. During the past 4 years nearly £60,000 has been spent upgrading all street lights to LED. A replacement light in Glebe way will be installed in August 2020 along with a new power supply.

The Parish Council has participated in the BC devolved services scheme since 2016 and

receives funding of £2734pa 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 was with Tool Shed, a social enterprise group that aims to give young people a first start in their working life, until 31 March 2020. Toolshed informed us that they would no longer be providing such services and the contract was retendered and subsequently awarded to Chesham Town Council.

The Parish Council has responded to residents' concerns about speeding on our roads and has invested £17,000 in purchasing 6 electronic speed monitoring signs since 2016. Chesham Bois is approximately one square mile in area and we have established that there are about 6 million vehicle movements per year on our roads.

We measure compliance of vehicle speeds below 35mph and the readings from 3 roads are detailed below:

- Compliance in Bois Lane is 98.3%
- Compliance in North Road is 97.3%
- Compliance in Copperkins Lane travelling from Hyde Heath to Amersham is 90.6%. Last year compliance was 80% so an improvement of 10.6 percentage points has been seen during the past 12 months.
- No data is currently

available from Amersham Road and Holloway Lane.

All data is shared with the police and they have agreed to conduct enforcement activity in these areas during 2019/20. As reported last year we planned to set up a Community Speed Watch Programme in the area and were grateful to the many volunteers that came forward to participate in the training provided by the police at the end of 2019. We intend to restart this initiative once the current COVID 19 crisis has abated. If you are interested in volunteering please let Samantha Payne, Parish Clerk, have your details clerk@cheshamboispc.org.uk

BC has conducted a parking survey in Amersham and Chesham Bois and has received feedback from many local residents and the Parish Council about proposed changes to parking restrictions in our area. The statutory consultation ended on Friday 17 July and a final recommendation report will be presented to BC shortly with a planned implementation by the end of 2020.

The Parish Council is always keen to hear your views on roads and transport issues; please e-mail, or telephone the Parish Clerk, or send a message via the form on our website contact page www.cheshamboispc.org.uk/your-parish-council/contact-us

*David King
24 July 2020*



VILLAGE EVENTS

Our village community activities for 2019 were, as usual, well supported and enjoyed by many residents. Between 40 and 50 of us walked the boundaries of the Parish on Rogation Sunday in May followed by tea and cakes in the Parish Centre. Our third annual Picnic on the Common was even more popular than before and the number of young and old who gathered in the sunshine to listen to the music and enjoy the unique surroundings of the Common continues to grow. The informal event provides a perfect opportunity for families to gather and socialise.

Our Autumn Commons Clear Up, Remembrance Sunday and the Christmas Lights and Carols we extremely well attended and continue to be important dates in the Village calendar.

2020 has not been the best year for many people and most of our planned events have been cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. These include the Spring Clear Up, Beating the Bounds and of course the biggest event, the biennial Village Fete and the RAF flyover. We look forward to when we will safely be able to hold these events in the near future. These, very popular occasions featuring music, entertainment and a wide assortment of stalls selling food, drink and local crafts bring together local residents and friends to enjoy the Common and woodland. The friendly, community atmosphere make Chesham Bois the wonderful place it is!

The coronavirus has had at least one positive outcome: more and more people are

out walking and exercising in the countryside in and around the village. The Chesham Bois Village Walk Leaflet was produced in May 2019. The leaflet describes a circular walk of 2.5 miles taking in some of the key landmarks and varied views of the Parish. It includes information about the history of the parish, the notable people who have lived here, and the varied wildlife that can be found. It is available to download on the council website.

We delivered a Chesham Bois Parish Council Corona Virus helpline leaflet to every household in the village with contact details and safety hygiene information. The support network that emerged to help those residents isolating or unable to do shopping was a tribute to the village community.

Together with Your Amersham Corona Virus Help we were able to make sure all of our residents that required help received it, whether with shopping or a friendly chat. We would always love to see more volunteers help with keeping the common and village clear of litter. We have been doing village litter picks along government guidelines but hope to be able to have a village clear up in September – look out for details on posters around the village.

We are establishing a new Working Group to look at environmental and sustainability issues in the Parish. Recently, the Group took part in the Bucks, Berks & Oxon Wildlife Trust series of webinars called Wild Parishes, looking at issues around managing areas to increase biodiversity.



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. The aims this year have been to continue the programme

of improvements to the Burial Ground and its environment, to further improve the digital Burial records systems, and to increase awareness of residents and the wider community of the Burial Ground and its services.

The latter part of the year also saw the impact of Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic on the achievement of some of these aims.

The Council has continued improvements in the Burial Ground, infilling the ground around unsafe Memorials, replacing lavender plants in the Garden of Remembrance, completing an electrical safety check and roof repairs for the Chapel. The diseased ash and prunus near the entrance have been removed, and the Council is now looking at how the entrance area can be re-modelled to provide more seating and a more attractive initial aspect. The rare grass chalkland meadow has also been maintained, with support from the Chiltern Rangers and advice from the Bucks Wildlife officer, using a selective mowing programme to help preserve the

distinctive mix of meadow plants. The Council also worked with the Beautiful Burial Grounds organisation, to establish a wildflower identification event for the public in June 2020, which has now been postponed until June 2021.

The Council has reviewed the effectiveness of the first year of the new Burial Ground marketing strategy to refine it to get best value for money. Monthly reports are now made showing where people purchasing plots heard about the Burial Ground, resulting in some new advertisements being placed in publications such as the Bucks Bereavement guide, alongside more regular postings in local publications. The Burial Ground website and Facebook page have been further updated, with the addition of recent testimonials as well as some stunning aerial photos, and both the Clerk and the Chair of the Burial Ground Working Group have attended social media training. There have been articles in both the local press and The Clerk magazine about the Burial Ground.

The Council has also conducted an evaluation of the current land usage and future land needs for the Burial Ground, as well as a benchmark review of its fees and charges. A new schedule was approved in January 2020, which keeps our fees in line with those charged by other local burial grounds, without incurring large increases for our residents, reflects the central government policy of June 2019 that the costs of burying children under 18 should now be free to parents and streamlines the recovery of fees relating to the Chapel and the Sexton. The Council is also working on developing a digital map of the burial ground and making the appropriate changes to the digital record and administrative systems so that it can both support the Clerk and

Sexton in managing the Burial Ground and be – to a limited extent – searchable by the general public in time.

The Burial Ground held its second open day in September to coincide with the National Heritage Open Day scheme. There was an information tent, staffed by the Clerk and Councillors, so that visitors could check up family history, and make any enquiries about reserving a plot. The Chapel was open for reflection and remembrance, and a new Memorial Book, listing those who had died in the previous year was created, and will be updated for each year going forward. Also, in September, the Council entered the Burial Ground for the Institute of Cemetery Management Cemetery of the Year Awards and was delighted to receive the Silver award. This represents a significant achievement for the Burial Ground and the staff who support it. The judging process also highlighted some additional improvements that could be made, such as the provision of a soil box and umbrellas for visiting mourners, which have now been implemented.

The final part of the reporting period has been dominated by the restrictions associated with the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic, which has delayed some of the work being taken forward on digital mapping of the Burial Ground, the associated renumbering exercise, as well as the Memorial safety training which had been



booked for staff and some Councillors. It also resulted in the need for regular review as regulations changed of the Burial Ground administration systems and the physical environment to keep staff and visitors safe, whilst preserving access for internments, for those visiting family graves, and for those using the area as part of their daily exercise routine. It is a matter of some pride that we have been able to keep the Burial Ground open throughout this period, and support those who use it at a very difficult time.