



# CHESHAM BOIS PARISH COUNCIL

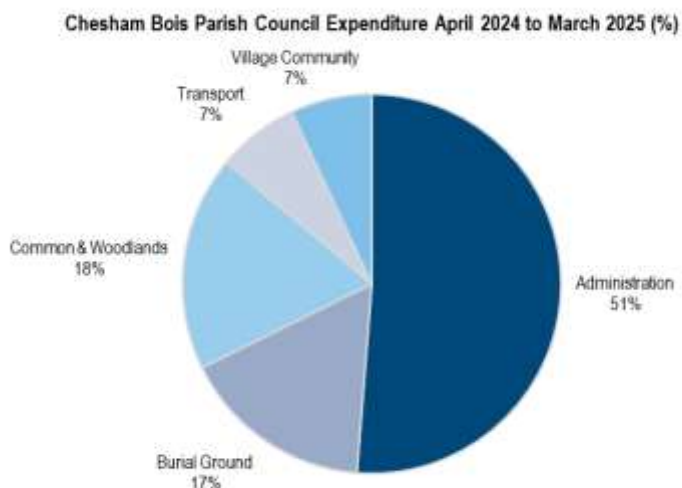
## ANNUAL REVIEW 2024 - 2025

The objective of this report is to provide an overview of Parish Council activities during the year to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 as well as information about annual income and expenditure. Chesham Bois Parish Council has eleven councillors who are all unpaid volunteers. There is a salaried Clerk whose primary role is to ensure that the Council complies with statutory and regulatory requirements and a Burial Ground Custodian.

As Chair of the Parish Council during 2024/5, I wish to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported the community events organised by the Council during the course of the year. I also wish to thank residents who have taken the time to provide feedback about council activities and local matters including the development of the Neighbourhood Plan for Chesham Bois. After three consecutive years as Chair of the Council, I am required to step down from that role at the Annual Council Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025 but will continue as a parish councillor and look forward to supporting the community in different ways in future.

**Lesley Winrow, Chair of Chesham Bois Parish Council 2022-2025**

**Finance:** Chesham Bois Parish Council had a gross income of £164k in 2024/25 (prior year £132k) and derives its income from the Precept; managing and operating the Burial Ground; Licences and Wayleaves; matched funding for projects (if any) from Bucks. Council via the Community Board and some small grants.



The Precept, (collected as part of the council tax), accounted for 58.75% of the total income for the year. During the year, the Parish Council spent £157k, (adjusted to £178k) and £21k was added to reserves to cover future capital expenditure and office rent payments.

The Council employs part-time staff at a cost of around £43k. Our councillors are all unpaid volunteers and we run a small office at a cost of c. £20k p.a.

- Exceptional costs were £14.5k legal fees and £3k for Neighbourhood Plan net expenses after a grant contribution from government.
- The Council owns and manages 18 hectares of local forest and land. In 24/25, the Council spent £29k on common, woodland and pond maintenance. £13k of this was for safety and emergency tree work.
- We have a legal obligation to provide and look after the Burial Ground. The income for 24/25 was £38k (LY 25k) and we spent £26k on operating and maintaining the Burial Ground.

- The Council owns and maintains 65 streetlights in the village, cuts the grass on many of our verges, clears footpaths, provides 7 vehicle activated speed signs to help raise awareness of vehicle speeds and these activities cost £11k. All our streetlights are energy efficient LED units following the completion in 2022 of a 6-year, £60k investment programme and the Council funds the cost of electricity.
- We spent £11k on several community events such as the Christmas Lights & Carols, Litter Picks, Communications and Environmental initiatives and installed a new power supply near the War Memorial to be used for community events.

The difference between our income and expenditure for the year, after transferring £26k (including a £5k grant refund to government) to named reserves, was a deficit of £20k. The original budget anticipated a deficit of £29k. Reserves cover longer term liabilities and unexpected events. Good practice guidelines are for 50% of annual operating costs to be in general reserves. At the end of the financial year, our general and named reserves totalled £163k and a breakdown can be found on our website with full details of the accounts for the year.

### **David King, Chair, Finance Working Group**

**Burial Ground:** The Burial Ground was established in 1924 and a service was held in the Chapel in September 2024 to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

A long-term Hedgerow Management Plan has been adopted by the council to protect and restore the 550m of hedges in the Burial Ground. Advice was provided by the 'Rough Around the Hedges' team that is now part of The Chiltern Society. Their expert hedge layers led a training programme for volunteers to lay the hedge between the New Formal and Woodland areas over a six-week period during bitterly cold weather in winter. Hedges across the entrance to the New Formal area are next on the schedule of work.



A dedicated space to store materials was completed in the summer of 2024 and the storage shed was restored

with a fresh coat of wood treatment paint.

The hillside location of the Burial Ground, surrounded by woodland and the Thomas Harding Meadow, is a peaceful place for people to visit and reflect. The cemetery is also a major asset for biodiversity. All enquiries should be directed to the Clerk.

### **Lesley Winrow, Chair Burial Ground Working Group**

**Common & Woodland:** The Parish Council owns Chesham Bois Common and part of Bois Wood. We also look after a further section of Bois Wood and Tenterden Spinney on long leases from The Woodland Trust.

We are continuing the programme of work, recommended and approved by the Forestry Commission and Chiltern District Council, as detailed in our 10-Year Woodland Management Plan that is published on our website. We have recently engaged a woodland consultant to review the Woodland Management Plan

and to oversee the maintenance of our woodlands.

We carry out a comprehensive safety check of all our trees alongside roads, paths and property every 18 months, alternating between trees being in full leaf and after leaf fall. The latest survey was done in February 2024 and all the recommended work has been carried out. The next survey is due in the summer of 2025.

We also monitor our ash trees for signs of ash dieback disease. Those surveys are carried out annually in late summer/early autumn. The most recent survey did not identify any trees requiring immediate attention.

### **Jill Harris, Chair Common & Woodland Working Group**

**Communications:** Meeting agendas and notices are posted on three noticeboards sited around the Parish, near the parade of shops on Bois Lane; by Bricky Pond; and on the A416 Amersham Road, adjacent to a bus stop.

Contact details, news items and a wide range of other information are also published online, on our website and social media accounts. We currently have 233 followers on Instagram (up from 198 last year); 308 followers on Facebook (up from 264); and 379 followers on X/Twitter, (up from 370).

The Parish Council submits a news article each month to Your Amersham magazine which is distributed free of charge to local residents. On occasion, the Parish Council also produces surveys and publications for specific events, such as the Summer Fete programme, the Neighbourhood Plan and high profile, important planning applications.

#### **Lesley Winrow, Chair Communications Working Group**

**Village Community:** The events organised over the last 12 months have been well supported by residents and visitors to Chesham Bois.

The annual 'Beating the Bounds' walk around the parish boundary of Chesham Bois took place on Rogation Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2024. After the walk, everyone was invited to enjoy well deserved refreshments in the parish hall.

The 2024 Summer Fete was our most ambitious yet, in terms of entertainment. Chiltern Voice Community Radio kept everyone entertained and Paul Megram

(Colonel Custard) taught circus skills to the children. In spite of torrential rain early on that day, the fete was a great success and well worth all the hard work by volunteers whose support was greatly appreciated.



A 'Picnic on the Common' was held on the afternoon of Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2024. This popular Bring Your Own (food and drink) event is now an annual fixture and is a great opportunity to meet other local residents in a relaxed environment. Friendly dogs on leads were most welcome too! Music is arranged by the Parish Council and was provided by a local band, Tinlin, who received great feedback.

Remembrance Sunday was held on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2024 and was well attended by residents, as usual. The two-minute silence was beautifully observed and the laying of wreaths, the parade of local organisations and a marching band provided a fitting tribute. Thanks go to the local Scouts, Brownies, Chesham Bois School, Chesham All Girls' Band, Amersham Town Council and the Royal British Legion for their support.

Our annual Christmas Lights and Carols evening was held on Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> December. This event continues to be very popular for local school children in particular as well as school choirs and brass band. With no rehearsal and often in challenging weather, it is wonderful that so many people still enjoy singing the carols! Much to our dismay, however, a new power supply fused as the lights were switched on for the wonderful Christmas Tree that was set up by the War Memorial this year. Fortunately, the power was restored later in the evening and the lights on the Christmas Tree shone bright through the festive season.

We organise two "Common Clear Ups" during the year, in Spring and in the Autumn. We usually promote the event online, on social media and on posters set up around the village. Going forward, however, we have also invested in large notice boards that can be recycled to include the dates of future events.



Please contact the Clerk for information about any of our

community events or your ideas for new ones!

**John Bailey, Chair  
Village Community Working  
Group**

**Environment:** A Biodiversity Policy has been adopted by the Parish Council and each working group has a responsibility to adhere to its principles in their decision making. Examples include the reduced use of plastics at community events and maintaining the Common and woodlands using the most environmentally friendly practices.

The annual clearance of bramble from the Thomas Harding Meadow was undertaken in the autumn of 2024 and new bulbs and shrubs were planted in the Burial Ground to encourage pollinators.

Fallen branches or trees which have impeded pathways or are deemed a risk to walkers have been cleared but others have been left to improve and benefit local wildlife habitat.

Diagonal footpaths across the Thomas Harding Meadow have been maintained but there is a 'no mow' policy for the remainder of the meadow which is rare chalk grassland and an important habitat for wild flowers and insects.

Bricky Pond remains one of the focal points of the village and is a delightful destination for walkers. The Parish Council obtains expert advice to manage the freshwater pond.

As a former clay pit used for brick making, the pond water naturally evaporates especially during spells of hot weather. However, this is a natural phenomenon and not detrimental to wildlife.

The water quality is tested each season and recent tests show no sign of nitrate or phosphate pollution.

Various debris was cleared out of the pond during the winter months by members of the council and volunteers.



Toads and newts are annual visitors to the pond and volunteers from Bucks. Raptor and Amphibian Group spent many evenings in March, helping the creatures safely across North Road. Sadly, the official 'toad crossing' road signs have been stolen and have not been recovered. The volunteers recorded common toads, palmate and smooth newts. Great crested newts have been recorded in the past but have not been seen for some time.

**Karen Keen, Chair  
Environment Working Group**

**Planning:** The Parish Council is a statutory consultee in relation to local planning matters. Decisions are made by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) which is Buckinghamshire Council.

The Parish Council has a Planning Committee which meets on a regular basis to review planning applications. Representations from residents are welcome and people should also submit their views about planning applications direct to the LPA as the decision-making body.

At the start of the year 2024/25, the Parish Council had to determine its response to an appeal by St. Leonard's Parochial Church Council against a refusal for planning permission to build a new development and car park across the sites of the current parish centre, rectory and adjoining glebe land, (reference PL/22/4074/FA). In this matter, the Parish Council acts as both a statutory consultee and as owner of adjacent Common Land.

Given the scale of the proposed development within the Chesham Bois Conservation Area, the Parish Council had published and distributed a survey leaflet to local residents in 2023 to help raise awareness of the scheme. The substantial majority of people who responded to the communication objected to the application for a variety of reasons.



The Parish Council, after looking into aspects of the planning application in detail, determined to object to it on the grounds that the scale of the proposed development would lead to unacceptable impact and harm to the Conservation Area; the environment; wildlife; and the amenity of local residents. In addition, the impact of a significant increase in traffic had not been fully considered. Also, it was not clear to the Parish Council that sufficient and proper regard had been given to any of these matters by Planning Officers of the LPA, which was also the view arrived at by councillors on the East Bucks. Area Planning Committee acting for the LPA, that resolved to refuse the planning application, for a second time, in January 2024.

Disappointingly, the appeal has been allowed by a Planning Inspector and planning permission has been granted, subject to 26 conditions. However, as landowner, the Parish Council in its written representations submitted onto the LPA planning portal has highlighted the fact that plans for the proposed development showed that access would be required over land owned by the Parish Council, to widen the entrance to the development site and for new pedestrian access.

The applicant had not approached the Parish Council about acquiring such land and, given the response of residents following the consultation exercise, the Council was not minded to transfer or grant a right of way over this land.

**Simon Staite, Chair  
Planning Committee**

**Transport:** The Parish Council's primary role in respect of local roads and transport is as a statutory consultee to Bucks. Council. We also report concerns expressed by residents for Bucks. Council to resolve.

Problems and defects with roads and pavements should be reported direct to Bucks. Council. The website [www.fixmystreet.buckscc.gov.uk](http://www.fixmystreet.buckscc.gov.uk) is the best way for reports to be submitted.

The direct responsibilities of the Parish Council include street lights with the exception of street lights on the A416 and lights on either side of the zebra crossing on Bois Lane which are maintained by Bucks. Council.

The Parish Council participates in the Bucks. Council Devolved Services Scheme which was extended this year for an indefinite period. The Scheme provides funds for the Parish Council to arrange for verges

to be cut; footpaths and rights of way to be weeded; and street furniture to be cleaned in line with our requirements. In response to residents' concerns about speeding, the Parish Council has re-located a Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign (MVAS) to monitor traffic in Bois Lane. If the data reveals that speeds are excessive, the Parish Council may consider the options available for traffic calming.

The Parish Council is keen to set up a Community Speed Watch Programme and would welcome volunteers. Training would be provided by Thames Valley Police. Please contact the Clerk if you are interested. The Parish Council is always interested to hear your views about local roads and transport issues as well.

**Paul Eckersall, Chair  
Transport Working Group**

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2025**

**Sunday, 25th May**

Beating the Bounds Walk  
Starting at 2 p.m. from the  
Parish Centre

**Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> July**

Picnic & Music on the Common,  
from 4 p.m.

**Saturday, 4th October**

Autumn Common Clear Up  
10 a.m. at the Parish Centre

**Sunday, 9th November**

Remembrance Day Service  
11.45 a.m. at the War Memorial

**Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> December**

Christmas Lights & Carols  
4 p.m. by the War Memorial

**Details of each event will be  
published nearer the date.  
Alternatively, please contact the  
Clerk to the Parish Council for  
information.**

**Neighbourhood Plan** In 2024, the Parish Council successfully applied to Bucks. Council to designate the parish of Chesham Bois as a Neighbourhood Area which is the first step towards the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan provides communities with the opportunity to shape future developments in an area and includes a future vision statement with supporting policies. Neighbourhood Plans also serve to protect local assets. Where there is a Parish Council in a designated Neighbourhood Area, the legislation requires the council to take responsibility for neighbourhood planning.

A Steering Group was formed to focus on the detailed requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan project and provide recommendations to the Parish Council. Members of the Steering Group are all unpaid volunteers and include local residents with relevant knowledge and experience as well as parish councillors. Consultants were engaged by the Parish Council to provide legal advice for the Steering Group with regard to planning legislation as a Neighbourhood Plan must align with the National Planning Policy Framework. Government grants to develop Neighbourhood Plans were available in 2024/5 and the council's application for funds for the year was successful. Unspent funds as at 31/3/25 had to be refunded.

To raise awareness of the development of a Neighbourhood Plan and engage the local community, the Steering Group produced flyers that were distributed at the Summer Fete; arranged an online survey in the autumn of 2024; and published information online and in Your Amersham magazine. A leaflet was hand delivered by volunteers to residents in March, inviting people to attend a 'pop up' event which was held on 15<sup>th</sup> March and proved very successful. More than 150 people attended to view the displays about the Neighbourhood Plan project and complete survey forms made available on the day.

The Chesham Bois Neighbourhood Plan, once approved, will be considered alongside the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire when decisions are made on planning applications by the Local Planning Authority.

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**This report is available on the Parish Council website.**  
**Copies with larger font text can be provided by the Clerk on request.**

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