

Cookham Parish Council

Annual Report 2022-23



Foreword

View from the Chair....

The Parish Council elections are looming, it's the final year for this Council. Looking back, I believe we have attempted to work fairly and robustly to represent the diversity of views held by our residents and community, yet once a decision the same group has worked as a united and trusting team to deliver solutions.

One of the main highlights for 2022 was the delivery of the Alfred Major Play Park renovation. This has been over 7 years in the planning, and over £55,000 of the eventual £85,000 cost came from private developers funds accrued for this purpose for over nearly 20 years. The park has been already enjoyed by many children, and the fitness trail has helped expand the offering for all to "keep fit".

We also welcomed our Twinning Association and their guests from St Benoit to a function at the Parish this Autumn, in return St Benoit have named a garden in their village "Cookham".

The Planning Committee has also worked hard keeping up with all the challenges which have resulted from a big "development" year. In addition to the usual flow of extensions, renovations and tree works, there has been the RBWM Borough Local Plan (BLP). This plan has caused a lot of concern in the village. Some of the more poorly drafted parts such as the tall buildings policy, have cost the Parish money to get clarified and sensibly altered. We would like our Borough colleagues to develop such plans in collaboration in future.

The two Borough Local Plan identified development sites also took up a lot of time and effort. Firstly the Strande Park site with its concerns and challenges regarding flooding, emergency access and site licences. Secondly, the Lower Mount Farm site, with its potential for over 200 homes, the concerns about the extra traffic, the overloading of local facilities such as the medical centre and lastly just what is being built, how, when, why, and is it really what Cookham wants for the future? The consultation for this site has been attended by Councillors at all stages

The Cookham Neighbourhood Plan also reflects the above concerns about the planning future of our village. The Working Group has invited and discussed comments from all. During 2023 we hope to see the results being brought forward, and a vision of a Future Cookham planning policy starting to emerge, with the residents getting their opportunity to vote on it at a referendum.

The General Purposes Committee has also been busy trying to revitalise the Allotment Association, as well as updating the facilities the Parish Council provides at the Cemetery and Alfred Major Ground. In addition the ongoing partnerships with Wild Cookham and Keep Cookham Tidy have developed further.

Flood Committee, after the passing of Chairman Cllr. Martin Coker, this committee has struggled to find its role. The new Council will need to reinvigorate it, to identify its future direction, but most importantly gain interest and engagement from the residents most likely to be affected.

Thank you to all Councillors, and volunteers for the hard work, regular attendance, good humour and giving up so much time for the community. Thank you all residents for participating in the Working Groups, meetings and other sessions.

Lastly, I wish to especially thank our Parish Clerk on behalf of all Councillors and residents. Jill Gavin has kept our meetings legally compliant and has successfully held the Parish Office together during a challenging year, during which we have been consistently under staffed. Thank you Jill.

Next year? A new Council, a new agenda and a new Chair.

Cllr Mark Howard, Chairman, Cookham Parish Council



Cllr Mark Howard
Chairman
West Ward (Cookham Dean)



Cllr Mandy Brar
Vice Chairman
Cookham Rise Ward



Cllr Mike Barnes
Cookham Rise Ward



Cllr Eileen Bune
Cookham Rise Ward



Cllr Christine Doyle
Cookham Rise Ward



Cllr Carol Aisladie
Cookham Rise Ward



Cllr Lesley Austin
Cookham Rise Ward



Cllr Helen Philip
Cookham Rise Ward



Cllr Jacqui Edwards
Cookham Rise Ward



Cllr Bill Perry
West Ward
(Cookham Dean)



Cllr Peter Roe
West Ward
(Cookham Dean)



Cllr Iain Herd
West Ward
(Cookham Dean)

Cllr Laura Tull
Cookham Rise Ward



Cllr Jane Perry
Cookham Ward



Cllr Ian Wernham
Cookham Ward

Committee Reports

Finance Committee

The members are: Cllrs Roe (Chair), Austin, Herd, Doyle, Perry B, Perry J, Howard, Brar

The Finance Committee is responsible for the setting of budgets and it also oversees the finances and governance of the Parish Council including:

- Completing the annual budget taking full account of the needs and requests of the General Purposes, Planning, Flood and Staffing Committees;
- Recommending a precept for approval by the full Parish Council to be collected from residents through RBWM;
- Overseeing the completion of the annual return and audit;
- Periodically reviewing the Parish Council's policies on such diverse matters as data protection, complaints and financial controls.

In line with the Committee's policy and as adopted by the Full Council, a balanced budget was prepared for the year with only a small deficit within the bounds of possible accuracy. The precept was increased by 5%, again in line with the policy for small incremental increases where needed.

The precept raised for the year was £134.0k which represents £45.07 for a Band D property. Total income for the year is budgeted as £174.7k against expenditure of £176.7k. Current year-to-date figures predict the Council should come in within budget and suggest a possible modest surplus.

Looking forward to 2023/24 the Council has set a further 5% increase in the precept so that a Band D property will pay £47.24.

Cllr Peter Roe
Chairman, Finance Committee

General Purposes Committee

This Committee consists of myself Cllr Christine Doyle (Chair) Cllrs C. Aisladie, M. Brar, E. Bune, I. Herd, M. Howard, J. Perry, B. Perry, H. Philip and I. Wernham and meets once every two months.

At the end of last summer by request of the Manager from our local **Elizabeth House Day Care Centre** for Parish Councillors to visit and speak about the work we do, two of us went to talk and answer questions about the work of the General Purposes Committee. Feedback was that this gave a good insight to just how much the GP Committee are responsible for.

Cookham Cemetery – focus is currently on the aesthetics of the shrubs and surrounds within the grounds, box hedging that unfortunately had to be removed due to blight and damaged edging to flower beds. Some terracotta edging stones have become brittle and worn over the years, it has been decided to replace these with granite sets to central beds, the same as are already in the cemetery extension. Terracotta edging stones that are still intact will be used around other beds and paths to replace broken ones making areas look much tidier and rejuvenated.

The Parish Council has agreed a new cemetery bench maintenance programme which will see benches throughout the site looking less weathered and any broken parts repaired.



The main front gates are looking great after a good, clean and new paint.

At the request of some visitors, a table was purchased and placed in a secure area where flowers could be prepared etc., unfortunately the table went missing within a few days.



However, we have decided to give this another go and will cement the replacement table to help deter another theft.

The War Graves and other graves were blessed on Sunday 13th November as usual by **Father Liam from St Edmund Campion**. Numbers of residents attending have steadily increased in the last few years and Father Liam was very pleased with the turnout last November to join in his short outdoor service.



Burials - All burials in Cookham Cemetery are given high priority with Cookham Parish office staff. Naturally if visitors to the cemetery notice anything that needs attention, please contact the office in the first instance.

Cemetery Lodge - as always there has been continued upkeep of internal decorating/tiling to keep the house in good repair, also replacement of white goods equipment where needed. Our Letting Agent and the Parish Council will be working together looking at the government's plans for mandatory energy efficiency performance levels.

Allotment Sites – it has been a difficult year one way or another, despite being able to socialise more coming out from Covid, the summer weather was quite intense for many months making it sometimes difficult for

tenants keeping their crops alive, however, bumper crops of fruit were reported. Vacant plots on sites were advertised and some new tenants are settling in, there is still a waiting list for plots on the Alfred Major site.

Allotment Association – From August '22 we asked all the three site allotment tenants (some 100) if they would like to start up the Allotment Association meetings again as this had been a very popular and positive Association pre Covid. Meetings have been held every two months since August, attendance numbers have been low but hit double figures with representation from each site. It is hoped that the tenants will eventually 'run' with this again as the year progresses.

Harris Woodbridge Wildlife Reserve (HWWR) – we are grateful to **Wild Cookham** for their quality guardianship of this reserve on our behalf, it has been transformed into a very pleasing wildlife sanctuary with many species of insects and birds being seen through the seasons and lots of flora, colours, shapes, and sizes a plenty. Wild Cookham has also put up a nice new sign. They are always looking for volunteers to help continue to develop the Reserve for the benefit of insects, birds, small mammals and us, details can be found on their website.



Alfred Major Recreation Ground (AMRG) – naturally the big project over the last year has been the new Play Park equipment, which has been a resounding success. The new equipment is under warranty and the original equipment is still maintained by our original contractors. There is still work to be done on replacing the surrounding fencing of the play park which was damaged during the refurb and due to storm weather. This and replacement of litter bins and possible mural painting of the skate ramp sides are projects being discussed for the coming financial year. Another investment has been the upgrade of

the cctv cameras which now have a much broader range and clearer recording.

In August 22 an event for **Keep Britain Tidy Love Your Park Week** was held in the park where we spoke with numerous visitors, including dog walkers, adults, children, joggers, PCSOs etc., about what they loved about the park and any concerns. Overall, everyone thought that AMRG was a fabulous space for all ages, everyone to pick up after their dogs, and to add more trees. Graffiti was also a concern, one that unfortunately keeps us busy.



Footpaths and streetlights

Other work is always ongoing behind the scenes including clearing of some footpaths and maintaining some of the streetlights which Cookham Parish Council are responsible for.

Stonehouse Common – continued maintenance of the site. Wild Cookham have sited one of their rafts there to monitor the coming and goings of any water mammals like mink, vole etc.,

Cookham War Memorials – Both the High Street and the Cookham Dean war memorials are in good repair; they were tidied prior to the Remembrance Services in November and are checked on regularly for cleanliness. Representatives from the Parish Council laid wreaths and attended services at both memorials and Councillors also laid wreaths at both, when the Queen passed away.

BT Phone boxes – The Bigfrith Road telephone box is still being used successfully for book exchanges and is kept clean and tidy by the local school and volunteers.

The Dean Lane phone box is currently under discussion. Being sited on the side of a very busy road and in some disrepair; ideas for what it could be used for going forward ranged from a bug hotel, housing for a defibrillator and a light box with photos of Cookham. One Cookham resident has offered to buy and restore it and place it in his garden for passers-by to see.

Cllr Christine Doyle
Chairman, General Purposes Committee

Wild Flower Project.

The Wildflower project started in 2021 to include wild flower plots in The Alfred Major Recreational Ground to make the area more attractive to pollinators along with residents and visitors.



After the success of the first plot a second has been established back in the Autumn of 2022. Working alongside and with the knowledge and advice of Wild Cookham, to ensure a successful project, the following considerations were followed: Siting re sun, wind, people, area and shape, Ground preparation annuals, perennials, shrubs and bulbs, Evergreens structures, maintenance, water, weeding, reseeding.

A working group of Cookham Parish Councillors was set up and the project commenced with the clearing of the overgrown plot. This took place over a weekend by volunteers, both Councillors and local residents, it took a lot of digging.

A selection of discarded logs were placed in the middle of the plot to create a stumpery. This creates an attractive feature but also attracts various wildlife, especially insects. Unfortunately, all the logs were removed by persons unknown within days.

Wild Cookham will be installing a sign, the same as in the original plot to mark this Wildflower patch. We are eagerly waiting for Spring to see the fruits of our labour.



Cllr Carol Aisladie
Lead on Wild Flower working group

Planning Committee

The Committee members for 2022/3 are: Cllrs Bill Perry (Chairman), Aisladie, Austin, Barnes, Bune, Edwards, Herd, Jane Perry and Wernham, as in 2019/20. Mr Dick Scarff of the Cookham Society was also re-co-opted in accordance with Standing Order 4.b as a non-voting member.

The Council is not as such a statutory consultee, but (like all other Parish Councils) is a routine consultee in respect of applications affecting the Parish made to the Local Planning Authority, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead ("RBWM"). RBWM says that comments and objections we submit to it are given particular profile in their decisions to permit or refuse applications.

RBWM has two regional planning Panels. Cookham comes within the zone of the Maidenhead Development Management Panel. As a specific consultee, this Parish has been entitled under RBWM's procedures to make verbal representations lasting 3 minutes in respect of any applications which are to be determined by the Panel.

Fortunately, Cllr Mandy Brar and Cllr Gerry Clark, our two Borough Councillors, now both sit on 'our' Panel. Cllr Brar, who is both a Parish Councillor and a Borough Councillor, continues to be most helpful in liaising with the Committee about applications it would like her to call in. Cllr Clark also calls in applications he considers appropriate.

The Planning Committee has met/will meet 12 times during the Council year from April 2022 to March 2023. To date this year we have reviewed 130 planning applications, 7 applications to undertake works on protected trees, and been consulted on 39 Tree Preservation Orders. The Committee has basically continued the policies on 'standard' responses and comments developed in 2019/20.

While this Council's Clerk and Assistant Clerk have good relationships with the appropriate RBWM Officers which means we often get necessary short extensions of time, the Committee has continued when necessary the system developed in the early days of the Covid pandemic: when RBWM requires comment on a timescale not fitting our meeting schedule, the Clerk or Assistant circulates a note of relevant application(s), email

comments are circulated by 'reply to all' and a consensus is developed by me as Chairman, which is reported to RBWM. The decision(s) is/are then ratified at the next meeting of the Committee. This system has continued to work well.

The Committee has made no comment on a large majority of the applications it has reviewed.

Comments or concerns were raised on 40 applications, including requests for conditions to protect other properties/the local environment, and/or to restrict future developments or use, or to ensure adequate parking or access. Objections, with reasons, have been submitted to RBWM on 32 planning applications for various new homes, buildings, extensions and/or conversion of agricultural buildings.

The Committee has asked me to represent it at Panel whenever it considers an application to which we have objected. I have done this on each occasion that has happened save one, where I was out of the country.

In the past year we have succeeded in persuading the RBWM Panel to reject first a plan for a block of flats at Station Court, and subsequently a block of terraced houses (reduced from two adjoining blocks after our objections to that version) on the same site. (These decisions are in addition to others where the Officers have accepted our views without a Panel meeting.)

Amongst the latter, I am pleased to report that on appeal the Inspector upheld the RBWM's refusal of permission, in accordance with our request, for a 15 metre high 5G telecommunications mast proposed for the corner of Mill Lane and Sutton Road close to housing, Holy Trinity School and the Cookham High Street Conservation Area.

During 2020/1, the Committee sought refusal of 3 applications for Heavy Goods Vehicle Licences to operate at Lower Mount Farm. The Council's/Committee's locus standi in such matters arises not from its status as Parish Council but from the Council's ownership of affected land. In the case of Lower Mount Farm, the land affected is the Cemetery, Chapel and Cemetery Lodge. The Committee has objected to all the applications on the grounds of nuisance, especially noise nuisance but also traffic, to residents and users of the Chapel and Cemetery. At the time

of last year's report, one such licence had been granted despite our objections but another was to be the subject of a formal hearing and the third was deferred to await the result of that hearing. To our knowledge, no further progress has been made with either of those applications over the last year.

As I have reported for the last 2 years, on 7 July 2020 the Council set up a Cookham Neighbourhood Plan Working Party, which now reports to Council separately from this Committee, though under my Chairmanship. That Working Party consisted of Cllrs Chris Doyle (Cookham Rise Ward), Mark Howard (Cookham West Ward), Martin Coker (Cookham Rise Ward), Ian Wernham, replaced during this year by Cllr Jane Perry (Cookham (i.e. Village) Ward) and me (Cookham West Ward). We work with consultees Dr Shez Courtenay-Smith (Chairman of the former Village Design Statement Working Party) and representatives of the Cookham Society (Mr Dick Scarff), WildCookham (Mr Lars Ahlgren) and Save Cookham (since autumn 2021 Mr Nic Dawkes).

During the year, Cllr Martin Coker sadly died. I am pleased to take this opportunity to pay tribute to his dedication, his efforts to participate despite ill-health and to the help which he generously gave me/us with documentation, recollection and wisdom. He was replaced by new Cllrs Jacqui Edwards and Laura Tull (both Cookham Rise Ward). A new organisation, Cookham's Footprint was invited to participate with the Working Party on the same basis as the other organisations.

The Working Party has met throughout the last year. During the year, the Working Party and then the Parish Council have signed off on the Design Guidance to accompany the Plan, and a Site Masterplanning document directed to the sites designated Borough Local Plan, both drafted by AECOM (the design consultants).

Further drafts of the Neighbourhood Plan itself were produced by Troy Planning + Design during the year. All are on the Council's website along with the Working Party minutes. The Working Party and consultees have worked with Troy Planning + Design (the Council's planning consultants) and commented extensively on the drafts. The Council has always been keen to ensure full transparency and equality of opportunity to the

public to comment (all meetings of the Working Party are open to the public, who may participate).

At a meeting on 4 January 2023, the Working Party and participants signed off the most recent draft, on which they hope it may be possible to go to consultation, subject to further enquiry of stakeholders, including but not limited to the landowners group. Contemporaneously, RBWM has been reviewing the draft for SEA and HEA purposes. RBWM's comments are awaited.

Following up on the BLP, an outline planning application has been made in respect of the Strande Lane site (AL38) by Shanly Group. We are engaging with them about it. Bellway Homes are already undertaking consultation about their envisaged application in respect of the Lower Mount Farm site (AL37). We are actively involved in that too. Troy Planning + Design have drafted and sent input for us on both.

We have also commented on RBWM's SPD on Tall Buildings. It seemed to us that this was prejudicial to the ambience and look of Cookham. Troy Planning + Design have drafted and sent input for us on this.

As reported last year, RBWM consulted on the Cookham High Street Conservation Area ("CHSCA") in 2016 and again in 2018. (The CHSCA extended east from the junction of The Pound with the Maidenhead Road as far as the Lulle Brook and south from the Thames to the junction of Sutton Road with Mill Lane – in effect including most of Cookham Village, Cookham Moor and The Pound.)

The Cookham Village Conservation Area ("CVCA" as it now is) Appraisal Statement was presented to RBWM Cabinet and approved by it on 29 September 2022. It came into effect during October 2022. It increased the size of the Conservation Area to include the whole of Marsh Meadow northwards up to its junction with Cockmarsh, Black Butts Cottages, and the Nursery School on Station Hill. It drew significantly on the work of Sir Stanley Spencer. Happily, it rejected suggestions that part of Poundfield be removed. Sadly it rejected suggestions that Roman Lea be included, but it specifically left open the idea of an additional Conservation Area for the area round the Station which includes it.

The Committee is disappointed that it remains unable to obtain a response to its queries relating to RBWM's Tree Preservation regime (see previous report). It has also been perturbed by the delay in RBWM determining retrospective planning application 21/02963, which at the date of writing remains undetermined more than 14 months after it was submitted and around 20 months since the structures and activity to which it relates were started. We have raised this formally with RBWM.

Cllr Bill Perry
Chairman, Planning Committee

An introduction of our Parish Office Staff;

Jill Gavin, Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer along with Christine Hunter, Administration Clerk. They work with and support Cookham Parish Council in achieving its aims and objectives. They both have extensive liaison with the team of Councillors, Contractors and the public.



A day in the life of our office staff would fill this report but just a few of the daily tasks include, keeping Council legally compliant and on track, being the main contact for residents (both in writing and phone calls), contractors and visitors, agendas & minutes, monitoring planning applications, administration of allotments and burials at Cookham Cemetery, press releases, liaison with 3rd parties for contracts, issuance and authorisation of invoices, balancing the Councils accounts and everything else that falls into that huge bucket of general administration, the list is endless.

It has been a busy year as a result of a vacancy in the office, which takes a period of time to recruit, thus leaving us understaffed for many months. Christine joined us just 4 months ago and under Jills leadership is on a steep learning curve. We are happy to have a full complement of staff again.

We have recently retained Croner as HR consultants, their guidance and advice has been valuable on legal matters such as recruitment.

We have also recently contracted LCC (Local Council Consultancy) to conduct a review of the staffing structure, salary levels and future needs.

Which leaves me to say on behalf of the Staffing Committee, which consists of Cllrs, Austin, Brar, Howard and Roe, a big thank you to Jill and Christine for all their help.

**Cllr Carol Aisladie
Chair, Staffing Committee**

Community Projects and Other Activity

KEEP COOKHAM TIDY PROJECT (KCT)



Coming into our 7th year.

Another busy year for the project with additional volunteers signing up to support, over a dozen **Duke of Edinburgh** Bronze and Silver volunteers signed up this year. Many thanks to all our newbies and of course to our regulars who have been supporting for years. The KCT social media site now has 173 members, all Cookham residents or businesses. There have been regular seasonal litter pick events with volunteers turning up to help.

Through the hot summer there was focus on Odney Common as it saw an abundance of visitors. **John Lewis Partnership** provided additional large bins which was most welcome as the **RBWM** bins were overflowing



In June primary students from **Harmony Alternative Provision** in Cookham asked to borrow kits to do a litter pick,



it was so successful that they purchased their own equipment to do a termly litter pick with their students, of course these will happen in Cookham so we continue to benefit.

In September KCT supported **Thames 21 Plasticblitz** in its second year, I am pleased to report that litter was significantly less than collected in 2021, meaning less plastic ends up in the river. A first for KCT; I incorporated some water testing; kits were kindly supplied by **Braywick Nature Reserve**. Three of our **Duke of Edinburgh** volunteers joined in to take part in the testing, overall, the results showed more than average nitrate and phosphate in the waters tested.



The results were recorded online with **FHT WaterNet Data Hub** on the website freshwaterhabitats.org.uk

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in all the Keep Cookham Tidy litter picking; so many volunteers going out in all weathers, Cookham is a richer place for having you wonderful families in it 😊



Cllr Christine Doyle Lead on Keep Cookham Tidy

The Parish Council and its Staff

Councillors (sub-committees)

Cookham Village Ward:

Cllr Ian Wernham (PC) (GPC)
Cllr Jane Perry (PC) (GPC) (Fin) (FMIC)

Cookham Rise Ward:

Cllr Carol Aisladie (PC) (GPC) (FMIC) (SC Chair)
Cllr Lesley Austin (PC) (Fin)
Cllr Mike Barnes (PC)
Cllr Mandy Brar, Vice Chair (GPC) (Fin) (FMIC) (SC) (EC)
Cllr Eileen Bune (PC) (GPC)
Cllr Christine Doyle (GPC Chair) (Fin) (EC)
Cllr Helen Philip (GPC) (FMIC)
Cllr Jacqui Edwards (PC) (FMIC)
Cllr Laura Tull (GPC) (FMIC)

Cookham Dean Ward:

Cllr Iain Herd (PC) (GPC) (Fin)
Cllr Mark Howard, Chairman, (GPC) (Fin) (FMIC) (SC) (EC)
Cllr Bill Perry (PC Chair) (GPC) (Fin) (FMIC) (EC)
Cllr Peter Roe (Fin Chair) (SC) (EC)

Key for Parish Council sub-committees: (PC)-Planning Committee; (GPC)-General Purposes Committee; (Fin)-Finance Committee; (FMIC)-Flood and Major Incident Committee; (SC)-Staffing Committee, (EC)-Emergency Committee

Contact details for all Councillors can be found at www.cookhamparishcouncil.org.uk.

Staff

Jill Gavin, Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Christine Hunter, Administration Clerk

Contact the Council at Council Office, High Road, Cookham SL6 9JF, telephone 01628 522003 (8.30am to 12.30pm Monday to Friday and also Tues 5-7pm) or email office@cookhamparishcouncil.org.uk.

Representatives on outside bodies

Councillors are appointed annually to various local groups and panels. Appointments for 2022 - 23 were:

Cookham Welfare Trust	Cllrs Brar, Howard, H Philip
BALC/DALC Executive Committee	Cllrs Austin, Brar
Pinder Hall Management Committee	Cllr Barnes
Patient Participation Group	Cllr J. Perry
Marsh Meadow Management Committee	Cllrs Doyle, J Perry
Marlow and Maidenhead Passenger Association	Cllrs Bune, Brar
Borough Flood Liaison Group	Cllr J. Perry
Parishes Flood Liaison Group	Cllr J. Perry
Maidenhead Waterways Liaison Group	Cllr Howard
Twinning Committee	Cllrs Brar, J. Perry
National Trust Liaison Group	Cllrs Aisladie, Austin
RBMW Local Access Forum	Cllr Howard
Allotment Association	Cllrs Bune, Doyle
Friends of Battlemead Common Group	Cllrs Aisladie, J. Perry
Water Safety Groups	Cllrs J. Perry, H. Philip



Cookham Parish Council
March 2023

www.cookhamparishcouncil.org.uk

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