

Burwash Parish Plan 2023 to 2025

Introduction

Burwash Parish Council has responsibility for providing a range of local services details of which can be found on the Parish Council website at <https://burwashparish.org.uk/>. The council consists of 13 members although at present it only has 12. The council employs a full-time Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer. In consultation with the community the Council also seeks to make improvements to facilities that benefit the local community and the environment, helping to maintain the rural character of Burwash Parish. The parish council is the first tier of local government and seeks to respond to the views of local people.

Operations.

The council is managed by monthly meetings of the Full Council together with Committees which help with the councils' operations, and several Working Groups which produce recommendations to the Full Council. The Committees, consisting only of Councillors at which members of the public are invited to observe, are Planning, Finance & Administration and HR. Occasionally specialist committees, such as the one regarding Down Meadow, take place but generally exclude the public. At the Working Groups, parishioners as well as councillors meet to discuss ways forward and present Full Council with recommendations. At present these are: Traffic and Transport, Car Park including public toilets, Environment and Maintenance, Community and Events and Young Parishioners. These Working Groups produce recommendations that are then put to the main Council for consideration. The Council intends to produce several plans to track and monitor these activities.

Planning Committee.

The Parish Council has produced a Neighbourhood Plan which it hopes will guide the development of the Parish. The Council also comments on all Planning Applications and is generally guided by the High Weald design guide and the dark skies policy.

The dates of Planning Committee meetings are published on the website and advertised on the Parish notice board but take place roughly every three weeks.

Finance & Administration Committee.

At present the Finance & Administration committee is incorporated in the main council meeting. To fund a series of projects the council has raised its precept considerably over the last four years, although for this year the precept has remained at last year's level. The Council's monthly spending is incorporated and approved by main Council and published in the minutes of the monthly meeting. It is likely that costs will continue to rise and there is a possibility that District will seek to devolve more responsibilities to Parish councils. At present there is no cap on Parish precepts in the same way there is on District and County spends. The council sets its budget with discussions at council between October and January and the council's decision is added to the council tax bills that go out in March.

The plan should be read in conjunction with the budget forecasts for the next 3 years and is colour coded to show the following: -

GREEN: These are likely to increase by the cost of living and are always going to need to be in the budget. These items tend to be fixed costs to ensure that the parish council runs year on year, i.e. Clerk Salary.

ORANGE: These items need to have sufficient funds to meet specified costs and could possibly be covered by a sufficient Ear Marked Reserves or are part of building up to an EMR.

BLUE: These are discretionary items for which the budget can be varied or even not spent on.

Community & Events Working Group

The Council has a Community & Events Working Group which consists of both Councillors and members of the public. This group seeks to improve all communications with parishioners and to lead on community projects such as the 'Love Burwash' campaign to ensure our village and hamlets stay tidy and attractive.

Annual assembly: This is organised by the Parish Council but is a meeting for the residents of the parish and is an essential event.

Internet Hub: This is a service operated by volunteers in the parish rooms where residents can obtain free of charge help with technical difficulties or issues.

Printing & stationary: May be covered elsewhere but includes mailshots/newsletters and posters, etc.

Events: Including presence at fetes within the parish, D Day celebrations, Kipling day, Love Burwash, etc.

Administration

The council employs a Clerk/RFO who is the Responsible Officer ensuring that all council business is conducted both lawfully and effectively as well as monitoring that the finances are reviewed and audited. The Council has an office and meeting room, and the office is open for public enquiries on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9.30am and noon when the Clerk is available. The Council has employed a handyman to carry out simple maintenance tasks on a zero-hour contract.

Clerk Salary: These are ongoing costs likely to be increased along with the cost of living or nationally agreed pay rises.

Employers NI

Employers pension contribution

Postage & stationery: This is also mentioned in the Community & Events item list.

Training Days: With a new council training should be encouraged.

General Administration: There are always likely to be general admin costs.

Legal & Professional: These are difficult to forecast but at present are in the region of £15k/year.

Audit & Rialtas: Rialtas is the TSB nationwide system that is used by parish councils as accounting software. These costs go with the finance package. Audit costs are a legal requirement so are fixed costs.

Insurance: The Council has both public liability & employers insurance for £10,000,000. This is a legal requirement.

Website & IT: The council must have a website and dedicated Councillor emails to ensure that they are GDPR compliant and are secure.

Promotional Materials: Could be moved to Communications & Events items list.

Capitol: Hard to forecast but includes such things as are on the council's inventory the toilet refurbishment will be under this heading.

Section 137 Spend: The Local Government Act 1972 gives Town, Parish & Community Councils in England & Wales the ability to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory power. The spend is based on a set amount per number of parish electorate. This year it is £9.93 per elector. (approx. 2800 electors at the last census approx. £28k).

Website: It is a legal requirement to ensure that Council meet the transparency requirements for a parish council.

Hut Overheads: These are running costs of the parish office & rooms and include the cost of electricity, etc.

Environment & Maintenance Working Group.

Matters relating to the environment & general maintenance are dealt with initially by the working group which is available to parishioners as well as Councillors and produces recommendations for the main Council. This group looks at general maintenance issues and is also concerned with all environmental issues such as Biodiversity, Dark Skies and liaising with groups such as 'Wild about Burwash'. This group also produces the draft resilience or emergency plan.

Dog Waste: An ongoing cost likely to increase rather than decrease. The parish council currently has 6 dog waste bins across the parish.

Flower planting: Optional to enhance the parish and perhaps include wildflowers and biodiversity.

Finger Posts: These are a parish council responsibility to maintain but a sufficient reserve could be held (say £2.5k).

Urban Grass Cutting: A must to maintain the verges and grassed areas.

Down Meadow: Once the legal issues are resolved we will need to bring this up to standard and keep it in good order in line with the environmental report and original plans for a wildflower meadow.

Handyman Maintenance: There are continually a series of small jobs requiring attention and this is likely to increase.

Village Pavements: At present the councils objective is to restore bricks to all sections of pavement in the conservation area.

Emergency Plan: Current guidance is that the council should have a resilience plan, and this is likely to incur considerable set-up costs.

War Memorial: This is an important part of the village and is likely to require considerable costs every 15-20 years £500/year should be put aside as an EMR for cleaning and general maintenance. Flowers are planted by a volunteer and paid for through section 137 payments currently.

Parish Hut Maintenance: This is becoming urgent as there is considerable rot in places.

Toilets/car park: This will cover such things as toilet cleaning, toilet water and electricity, car park lighting and CCTV.

Tree survey/maintenance: This is a legal responsibility and is likely to increase every year. Minimum is to survey every 3 years but recent high court case states annual surveys.

Grit Bins: Some are owned and filled by ESCC but 3 across the parish are owned by the Parish Council and must be filled every year.

Human Resources.

This Committee generally meets with members of the public excluded as it deals with the terms, conditions, and salary of the clerk. It is the HR groups responsibility to recommend expenditure on any staffing matters.

Traffic & Transport Working Group.

Matters associated with traffic management, safety and other travel related items including footpaths and bridleways are dealt with initially at this group which makes recommendation to main Council. The main items dealt with at this group are the 20mph speed limit in the High Street, along with proposals for Quiet Lanes and protection of our wildlife verges. This group also deals with footpaths and bridleways, and it is hoped to produce cycle/walking/riding paths to both Stonegate and Etchingham stations by surfacing the bridleways such that they are available for all horse riders, pedestrians, and cyclists. This group also deals with Speed Watch and other requests for traffic management. The group was instrumental in the introduction of the 20 mph in Vicarage Road and Lane. At present the projected cost of introducing 20mph in the High Street is more than £170. This year's budget is £6.4k with an EMR of £40k.

Speed Watch: This is an ongoing cost and is necessary to maintain the speed profile within the parish.

Quiet Lanes: It is council policy to pursue quiet lanes but an EMR of £2.5k would be sufficient.

Car Park: At present there are no additional costs for the car park but there are likely to be future expenditure for electric charging and surface repairs. It is suggested that an EMR be set up and £1.5k per year be paid in.

Traffic Surveys: Surveys are the way that highways look at any request for speed reduction, at present we have 3 schemes in progress at a possible cost £3.5k.

Engineer Advice: These generally cost £600, and we tend to submit at least 3 a year.

Car Park & Toilets Working Group.

This group has not met since the council took over the car park and toilets. Since taking over the car park and toilets the council have arranged for the car park to be re-lined, the lights to be partially repaired, closed circuit TV to be fitted, the waste station to be removed and we are considering improving the toilets at a cost in the region of £40k. The maintenance & operation of the car park tasks are currently delegated to the Clerk through the Scheme of delegation.

Young People Working Group.

This group has had its initial meeting, but it is hoped to focus on the needs of young people between 13 and 17 to see what the PC can provide for them in conjunction with the other youth and playing field groups in the Parish. Following a suggestion from the BPFA the council have made a grant of £20k towards a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA).

Grants & donations.

The council has a budget for grants to good causes that benefit residents of the parish.

This year the budget is £15k.

Future plans

In addition to the proposals from the working groups the council is hoping to investigate the possibility of replacing the wooden huts with a purpose-built community hub and it is hoped that next year's budget will have funds to see the project started. It is anticipated that the council will carry on looking at all budget items as forming our projected expenditure over the duration of this council. Information on detailed expenditure is shown at each council meeting.

Community Hub: This is council policy and is being investigated with a view to feasibility this year and if pursued is likely to incur considerable costs in future years with a potential government works loan being explored.

Active Travel: This is a national policy, and we should be spending money to encourage it but at present the only two schemes are far too expensive.

Speed Limits: Generally council policy is to look at reducing speed limits and there is a petition from the village for a speed reduction which at present is coming in at £50k.

Emergency Plan: This is a requirement for the council and needs to be effective if it is to be credible.

Forecast Document on the following page.....

		Budget 2024/25	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028	Comments
		Agreed	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	
<u>Administration & Finance</u>						
Clerk Salary		45,500.00	46,869.00	48,271.00	49,719.00	<i>Increase of 3% per annum</i>
Employers NICs & Tax		8,000.00	8,240.00	8,488.00	8,742.00	<i>Increase of 3% per annum</i>
Employers Pension Cont		3,000.00	3,090.00	3,183.00	3,279.00	<i>Increase of 3% per annum</i>
Postage and stationery		1,000.00	1,050.00	1,103.00	1,136.00	<i>Increase of 3% per annum</i>
Training Days		100.00	500.00	529.00	552.00	<i>Increase of 5% per annum</i>
General Administration		1,500.00	1,545.00	1,592.00	1,640.00	<i>Increase of 3% per annum</i>
Legal and Professional		-	8,000.00	8,000.00	8,000.00	<i>Unquantifiable spend - take from reserves?</i>
Audit and Rialtas		650.00	670.00	690.00	711.00	<i>Increase of 3% per annum</i>
Insurance		3,000.00	3,150.00	3,308.00	3,473.00	<i>Increase of 5% per annum</i>
Website & IT		1,000.00	1,030.00	1,061.00	1,093.00	<i>Increase of 3% per annum</i>
Grants & Donations		15,000.00	16,000.00	17,000.00	18,000.00	<i>Already allocated £3k to churches</i>
Promotional Materials		1,800.00	1,854.00	1,910.00	1,967.00	<i>Increase of 3% per annum</i>
Section 137 Payments		600.00	630.00	662.00	695.00	<i>Increase of 5% per annum</i>
Hut overheads		2,450.00	2,622.00	2,806.00	3,002.00	<i>Increase of 7% per annum</i>
TOTAL		83,600.00	95,250.00	98,603.00	102,009.00	
<u>Environment & Maintenance</u>						
Dog Waste		1,100.00	1,155.00	1,213.00	1,274.00	<i>Increase of 5% per annum</i>

Flower Planting Programme	-	800.00	800.00	800.00	Project
Finger Posts	400.00	500.00	600.00	700.00	
Grit Bins	-	200.00	250.00	300.00	1k in EMR
Urban Grass (Hornbeam)	4,200.00	4,326.00	4,456.00	4,590.00	Increase of 3% per annum
Down Meadow Cuts	1,250.00	1,288.00	1,327.00	1,366.00	Increase of 3% per annum
Handyman Maintenance	3,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	All costs for 2023-24 recommend to come from EMR. £2k = 111hrs @ £18ph
Village Pavements	2,500.00	2,000.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	Project
War Memorial	400.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	Annual EMR
Parish Hut Maintenance	500.00	500.00	500.00	500.00	Unquantifiable cost and dependent on Community Hub feasibility
Toilets	3,800.00	3,990.00	4,190.00	4,400.00	24/25 includes start up equip. Forecast is at 5% increase
Tree Surveys/Maintenance	4,000.00	4,280.00	4,580.00	5,000.00	Serious maintenance works for Hornbeam & DM in future years. 7% increase
Footpaths/Cycle/Bridleways	-	-	-	-	Project
Emergency Plan	-	5,250.00	5,513.00	5,789.00	Project Proposed budget allocation for 2 x generators. Forecast @ 7%
TOTAL	21,150.00	26,789.00	27,429.00	28,719.00	
<u>Community & Events</u>					
Annual Assembly	630.00	649.00	669.00	689.00	Statutory duty. Forecast is @ 3% increase
Internet Hub	-	-	-	-	
Events	1,000.00	1,030.00	1,061.00	1,093.00	Project - includes Kipling day. Forecast increase @ 3%
Young Parishoners	-	500.00	515.00	531.00	Project - support through grants

Community Hub		4,000.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	Project - consideration for evolvement of architect drawings, etc. Unquantifiable
	TOTAL	5,630.00	6,179.00	6,245.00	6,313.00	
<i>Traffic & Transport</i>						
Car Park Maintenance		1,000.00	1,070.00	1,145.00	1,226.00	Increase of 7% per annum
Traffic Surveys		2,600.00	3,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	3 for Burnt House Farm stretch & 1 x Swing Gate Hill @ £500 + VAT each
Engineer Advice		-	-	-	-	
Speedwatch		-	-	-	-	
Quiet Lanes		-	840.00	882.00	927.00	Project
	TOTAL	3,600.00	5,410.00	4,527.00	4,653.00	
GRAND TOTAL		113,980.00	133,628.00	136,804.00	141,694.00	