

WILLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 2024



PARISH COUNCILS – WHO ARE THEY?

Parish and Town Councils are the level of local government closest to the needs of local people. Parish and Town councils are created in law and are required to act within the laws by exercising the powers and functions which have been conferred on them by Acts of Parliament. However, these laws give the Parish and Town council a wide remit within which to improve the lives of their local community. The Council collects a precept each year (a sum collected with the council tax each year from the householders in the parish) specifically intended to maintain and improve facilities and services for local people. The precept for 2024/2025 is £179,975.

Parish and Town Councils are the least bureaucratic and the cheapest form of local government in existence. All sums collected are invested in the needs of the Parish itself. They are elected bodies and as such are responsible and responsive to their local electorate.

WILLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Willingham Parish Council is made up of 15 Councillors all of whom are unpaid. The period of office of a Councillor is normally 4 years, but if they have been co-opted or elected at a by-election, they will serve until the next normal election. Due to the Northstowe Governance Review the Council held their elections a year early in May 2021. The term of office will run for 5 years to bring the next election in line with District Council Elections.

The Council currently employ five part time members of the staff:

The Clerk – Mandy Powell

The Deputy Clerk – Amy Rudderham

The Compliance Administrator – Annika Osborne

The Finance Officer – Sarah Rutherford

The Litter Picker – Claire Mumford

You can contact the Parish office by email or phone:

01954 261027 clerk@willinghamparishcouncil.gov.uk

CHAIR'S REPORT

After several years of full participation, the Parish Council ends this year with a vacancy. Before I joined the council, a frightening 11 years ago in September 2012, I had only a vague idea of what the council did beyond looking at planning applications.

Having chaired the Planning Committee for many years, and the Full Council since 2019, I now know that there is little in the village which is not overseen by the volunteer councillors and the excellent office staff. This includes:

- the maintenance of our many green areas: the recreation ground, cemetery, QEII field, village green, Barton's Field and Meadow Road – and from this year the Community Orchard (with assistance from the Willingham Action Group);

- the administration, maintenance and improvement of our buildings: the Ploughman Hall, Public Hall and Pavilion; and
- support of various community groups through direct grants and donations, or subsidised hire rates.

The council is often the first point of contact for parishioners when there are problems in the village and we then speak on villagers' behalf to the various representatives and officers of District and County Councils, electricity and water companies, police and health authorities, and all the way up to our Member of Parliament.

Finding the funds for all this work in an increasingly austere financial environment is an important part of the council's work. There always seems to be another service which was once provided by higher authorities but now falls to the Parish to provide.

This might all sound daunting, but there is a wealth of experience and support available from other councillors and the parish council office. Training is provided for all aspects of council activity, from charring meetings to running playgrounds. The truth is, without our volunteer councillors, most of the things we cherish about village life could disappear. And it can be a very rewarding experience.

Please read the rest of this report to find out what has been achieved in the last year and do get in touch with the clerk or any councillor if you want to find out more - and perhaps fill that last remaining council seat.

I will finish by thanking all the members of the Parish Council for their hard work and dedication and expressing my gratitude to the council office and other staff for their commitment and support.

Derek Law
Chair

CEMETERY

The west/north west corner the Cemetery wall was repaired successfully. It was firstly taken down and then rebuilt with it being 'feathered in' to the existing wall on Church Lane.

Qualified testers have carried out 'Topple Testing' in the Cemetery to identify any unsafe memorials. This is a statutory requirement and it is carried out at required intervals.

Memorials requiring work to make them safe were marked, and burial right owners and the problems were identified. This is so that they can arrange rectification work. Where there has been no response from the burial right owners, then the memorials will be laid flat on the grave as outlined in the original contract letter.



The Cemetery tap will be secured in the coming weeks, following a problem with the wooden casing that gives support.

The Large 'Euro Bin' by the Stile Lane Gate has been replaced with two bright blue smaller 'wheelie bins'. These bins will be emptied weekly and are more accessible. The metal dustbins will be removed from the tap area, and it will be requested that all waste goes straight into the 'Blue bins'.

The War Memorial was again the focus of the Village's 'Remembrance Sunday' Service with a good attendance of over 300 people – this included Willingham Scouts, Cubs, and Brownies.

We are grateful for the help that Mark Mumford has provided over the year emptying the bins into the 'Euro Bin'.

Brenda Mansfield.
Lead Councillor Cemetery

GREEN AND BOUNDARIES

Community Orchard

The Parish Council took back management of the Orchard from Willingham Action Group earlier this year retaining volunteers on the orchard who continue doing a fantastic job helping to keep this special facility looking good for residents to enjoy.

A while back in 2023 the Council installed a dog bag dispenser for dog walkers to dispose of their dogs waste in the bins provided. This has proved to be a popular addition for dog walkers.

At the end of March two new bins were installed outside the main gate, one for recycling the other for general litter/dog waste.

The village green

The new Christmas lights were put up and I am looking into maybe a couple of extra poles to extend the lights further round the Green in a circle for Christmas 2024. Ahead of Christmas 2024, the Council will be looking at the electrics on the Green to ensure everything is in full working order following the flooding last year.



Pyrethium Way

The two greens are in good order although one tree had to be cut down and a new fence installed due to rot.

Meadow Road

Wildlife Meadow on Meadow Road is an ongoing project to further enhance the 250 new hedgerow plants and a large number of whips already planted.

I met with Cambridge Acre in February to discuss the installation of the nature pond and despite the recent set backs, weather permitting this could start in May this year.

Barton Field

This area continues to be enjoyed by walkers and the whips planted last year along the boundary continue to thrive.

Long Pond

The District Council continue to monitor and maintain the pond, dredging it during 2023. Following the high rain fall during the year the level of the pond has remained high.



Jim Watson
(Lead councillor Green & Boundaries)

LEISURE AND AMENITIES

Recreation Ground

The main story for 2023/4 concerns water. The recreation ground was flooded in October and then repeatedly throughout the winter, and is only now becoming dry enough to be useable for formal sports. We are looking into whether the drainage can be improved, with the possibility of an FA grant to cover any works identified

Thankfully the upper rec has remained playable for most of the year but as a result of this heavy usage the grass is in poor condition. Willingham Wolves are looking into applying for an FA Pitch Maintenance Grant.

The Willingham Wolves football club continues to grow, but due to the lack of pitch space on our rec, made infinitely worse by the flooding, they are increasingly using the pitches at Northstowe for training and matches. However, the rec was the venue once again over two weekends in June for their very successful football festival.

Willingham Cricket Club is now combined with Over to provide a bigger pool of players. During the 2023 season sadly the majority of matches were played at Over but it is hoped that Willingham will host more in the forthcoming season.

Pitch space continues to be a problem. During the summer of 2021 we engaged closely with the updating of the Greater Cambridge Playing Pitch Strategy, providing detailed information and meeting with the consultants drawing up the strategy. In particular, we put the case for both our proposed tarmac tennis and netball courts and an artificial 3G football pitch. We understood that the report was due in the Spring or summer of 2022 but we have seen nothing as yet.

The Bowls club had a successful summer season but the green has suffered badly over the winter, being repeatedly flooded, with much remedial work required both on the green and the buildings.

In July, the very popular annual Fen Gallop took place – a 10 k and 4 mile chipped timed run, with around 400 runners, with the Willingham Primary School summer fete immediately following the runs.

As with many of the activities described above, this success depended on the huge amount of work put in by teams of volunteers, and we are very grateful for their efforts. It is lovely to see the recreation ground being well used.

QEII Field

It is lovely to see this facility being well-used by families all year round. Due to wear and tear we have again spent several thousand pounds on repairing the equipment, and this will be an ongoing cost to the village. We were particularly sad to see a different kind of vandalism - damage to the rubber seats on the seesaw and the zip wire due to biting by dogs, requiring expensive replacements. The installation of a camera covering those areas helped with deterrence.



Pavilion

With the growth of Willingham Wolves football club comes a huge increase in the amount of equipment they need. The pavilion was built with almost no storage space. The Wolves have agreed to apply for a free container from the FA. Originally it was to be sited next to the current one, but over the winter this area was badly flooded and inaccessible, so the plan now is to site it next to the pavilion.

MUGA – Two Tennis and Netball Courts

Planning permission was finally obtained in December 2023 after a lengthy delay due a requirement for more information on ecology, parking and a cricket ball strike assessment, followed by a further delay as a bat survey was required which could only be done in late spring/summer. Before work can start we have to fulfil various conditions regarding drainage and traffic movements, and gathering the information needed is now underway. The project will be largely funded by S106 money but grants may also be obtained from Amey Cespa and the Lawn Tennis Association

Finally, my thanks are due to my deputy lead councillor, Simon Clark, for his invaluable help in keeping up with the many minor repairs needed, and his support over the year in all aspects of L&A activities.

Linda King
Lead Councillor, Leisure and Amenities

HALLS



The Ploughman Hall and Public Hall have, over the course of this year, proved popular and busy with a range of regular and individual bookings across a wide range of activities from ballroom dancing to parties. Scouts groups and, newly this year, table tennis. Users have in general provided positive feedback and enjoyed using the facilities. The Clerk's office team have proved excellent in supporting the provision and the Parish Council thanks them for this work.

A new access system for users in the Ploughman Hall has been installed which allows card based access to the hall and removes the need for guardians to open and close. Aside from one or two teething problems it seems to be working well.

The recently installed heating system has required some remedial work and now seems to be operating well.

Following advice, the Parish Council has given notice to the PHUC (Public Hall User Committee) and to the WYT (Willingham Youth Trust) of our intention to not renew the agreements regarding the administration of the Public Hall and the WYT area in the Ploughman Hall. This will have the effect of bringing the management of both areas under the control of the Parish Council. We hope to support and enhance the work of both these groups over the long term.

The Parish Council has stressed their support for the valuable work and opportunities both groups provide especially to the young people of the village. We are currently working through future arrangements.

The Public Hall is, and has been for some while, in need of some serious upgrades. These include issues around damp, windows and access. These issues form part of an ongoing discussion about the strategic direction the Parish Council needs to develop. We are actively seeking information and quotations regarding the requirements and costings but currently it would appear that a figure north of £100K would be required.

Storage in both halls (and the Pavilion) continues to be an issue. With large pieces of equipment like stage blocks, table tennis tables etc requiring storage. We are actively looking at how storage can be improved.

Simon Clark
Halls Lead Councillor



PLANNING

The planning committee considers all applications carefully and gives recommendations to SCDC based on the value of the proposals to the village in amenity and design, and the impact of any development on the residents. We are very conscious of the village status as a minor rural community and discourage any development outside the village framework.

The Council are also very conscious of the impact of new developments on surface water and flooding within the village and agreed to object to any applications that would have a negative impact until surface water issues were addressed.

During the year the Council considered around 70 applications, 26 of which they supported, 21 the objected to and 23 the made no recommendation.



Barry Todd
Chair of Planning

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY



The Parish Council continues to have good local links with groups such as the Willingham Action Group. WAG and the Parish Council aim to work together on projects such as to improve our village environment, reduce our energy use and to assist with small scale planting on our Parish green spaces. WAG's Repair Cafés enable villagers to create less waste by facilitating the repair of household items. However, if electrical goods cannot be repaired then our use of the SCDC 'Pink Bin' which the Parish Council has booked can enable us to recycle small electrical items and prevent them going into landfill.

Within the village we are still looking at ways of improving and maintaining our larger green spaces with a view to encouraging wildlife. Cllr Linda King attended a course run by New Life in the Old West on establishing and managing wildflower meadows. Having difficulties with contractors has meant delays to the wildflower planting we had initially planned near the QEII and Ploughman Hall area. This year, we are grateful that the Gardening Club have taken over the responsibility for maintenance of our six well established, flower tubs.

The county undertaking, New Life in the Old West continues to be of interest to us since it links our village along that wild-life corridor: from the RSPB fenland area on Shelford Road to the maturing field and the pond planned for Meadow Road. Willingham is highlighted as a good example in the wider County and Fenland magazines for these environmental projects.

Under the new UK Governments' Environment Act (2021) South Cambridgeshire District Council are seeking to help Parish Councils with their Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain endeavors. Following a meeting with their lead officer, Luke Waddington, we were able to show him the wide range of schemes we already have in place, such as at Barton Field, Meadow Road and the Community Orchard, along with those planned for the near future, plus how we envisage maintaining these over time. Our work in this area is now listed in the SCDC website directory so that we can be a point of contact for other Councils needing help with their nature projects.

Cllr Valerie McKee & Cllr Linda King

GRANTS AWARDED 2023 – 2024

Grants have been awarded to the following groups during the last 12 months:

BENEFICIARY	AMOUNT
Over Day Centre	£3,000
Willingham Youth Trust	£6,912
Community Roadwatch	£200
Bowls	£1,400
Willingham Community HUB	£400
Willingham News	£3,073

SUBSIDISED FACILITY USE - 2023 – 2024

The Council continues to provide free use of the Pavilion and Recreation Ground for the Youth Teams in the village as well as reduced charges for community and education groups using the Ploughman Hall. Local Groups also benefit from the reduced cost of using the Public Hall which is currently run by the Public Hall User Committee and at present is mainly used by the Scout Group and the renovated section of the Ploughman Hall which is currently run by Willingham Youth Trust.

COMMUNITY LIFELINES

The Parish Council pays for the provision of fourteen community lifeline monitors from the District Council for residents who need them in the village. These lifelines are extremely valuable in helping to enable residents to remain independent and in their homes where possible. The District Council will be discontinuing their provision of these from the end of June 2024 but the Parish Council has decided to continue funding the fourteen units through an alternative supplier.

CORONATION OF KING CHARLES

III

On the 7th May we saw the Coronation of King Charles III take place and many of our residents joined in the celebrations at the Ploughman Hall. A great day was had by all and the Council provided all the children of Willingham Primary School with a commemorative mug to remember the occasion. A massive thanks to WAG for organizing such a fun day for all involved.



HIGHWAYS

SpeedWatch

The past year has seen a great deal of activity by the SpeedWatch group operating mainly along Earith Road. Alas, they have recorded many vehicles travelling over the speed limit, some by quite a large amount. This has resulted in reports to the police who issued them with letters notifying that their speeding has been recorded. Additionally, the group notes vehicles not taxed or without an MOT and inform the police. The group changes the batteries on the Speed Indicating Devices (SIDs) and notes the speeds these record, some in excess of 100mph on the 30mph sections.

20mph Zone

Following the online survey carried out last year, the Parish Council applied for a 20mph zone to be implemented in the village. Cambridgeshire Highways have approved this and presented a scheme to the village. As there were comments that not everyone in the village was aware of the online survey, the letter for the proposed scheme was included in the Willingham Newsletter which goes to every house. The response was generally in favour of the 20mph zone and we await final details from Highways.



Rampton Road

Two years ago, there was a proposal for traffic calming measures along Rampton Road funded by Section 106 money from the Northstowe development. At the time a survey of residents showed that the majority of those that replied were in favour. Following the highways letter detailing both the speed cushions (bumps) and the 20mph zone, there was a majority against the bumps. As a result of these conflicting responses, a further letter was delivered to the residents of Rampton Road and further comments were also delivered. The result was a narrow opinion against the scheme so the PC has recommended that the speed bumps should not be installed.

Parking

Enforcement of the parking restrictions (Yellow lines) in Cambridgeshire is now carried out by civil contractors on behalf of South Cambridgeshire District Council. We have been informed the village will be visited regularly and fines issued for those who park illegally. Hopefully this will reduce the dangerous, frustrating and selfish parking by some drivers especially around the school at start and finish times.

Local Highways Initiative

The Parish Council LHI bid in 2024 is for a footpath along Over Road to High Gate Farm. This well used facility in the village has no pedestrian access and the aim is to make it safer and to encourage residents to walk and not drive. The cost will exceed the maximum LHI allowance so this would be topped up the PC funds and a donation from the site owner.

The Parish Council will continue to support the SpeedWatch group and will to campaign for measures to reduce the impact of traffic on residents.

Councillor Neil Harris
Highways representative

PARISH COUNCIL ASSETS

Property and Land belonging to the Parish Council

Ploughman Hall- West Fen Road, Willingham, Cambs, CB24 5LP

Date Purchased: Year 2000

Purchase Price: £239,304

Unique Property Reference No: 10003188724

Map reference: E544872 N245256

Freehold

The Ploughman Hall houses the Council office and the sports hall and the Youth facility. The sports hall is available for hire by both regular users and one-off bookings. The Youth facility is leased to Willingham Youth Trust on a 10-year lease. This lease is due for renewal in 2025. The Parish Office is open to the public Monday to Thursday 10am to 1pm

Sports Pavilion – West Fen Road, Willingham, Cambridgeshire CB24 5LP

Date Purchased: 1972

Purchase price: Not known

Unique Property Reference No: 10033035727

Map reference: E540185 N270670

Freehold

The Sports pavilion is a facility provided by the Parish Council in conjunction with a grant awarded by the Sports Council for the use of local clubs and other users and consists of a small meeting room, kitchen and changing room facilities.

The Old Recreation Ground/Community Orchard – Earith Road, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: Not known

Purchase price: Not known

Unique Property Reference No: Not known

Map reference: E540467 N: 271276

Freehold

The Old Recreation Ground is situated on Earith Road and was transformed into a community orchard in 2015 in conjunction with Willingham Action Group.

The Recreation Ground – West Fen Road, Willingham, Cambs, CB24 5LP

Dates Purchased: Dec 1997

Purchase price: £26,271

Unique Property Reference No: 10003197804

Map reference: E540136 N270691

Freehold

The Recreation Ground is situated behind the pavilion and the various sections of it were purchased between 1898 and 1997. The Recreation Ground contains several football pitches, cricket pitch and practice nets. The Recreation ground is available for hire by local groups and other users.

Jubilee/QEII Field – West Fen Road, Willingham, Cambs, CB24 5LP

Date Purchased: Not known

Purchase price: £15,000

Unique Property Reference No:10091623511

Map reference: E540187 N270782

Freehold

The QEII Field sits behind the Ploughman Hall and hosts a large play area which was significantly upgraded in 2015. The Field was registered with Fields in Trust in 2014.

Meadow Road Site – Meadow Road, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: January 2015

Purchase price: £50,000

Unique Property Reference No: 100091654618

Map reference: E541884 N270840

Leasehold

The Parish Council purchased a 125-year lease in January 2015 for the site and it has been agreed to develop the site into a community woodland.

The Cemetery – Church Lane, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: Not known

Purchase price: Not known

Unique Property Reference No: 100091611368

Map reference: E540354 N270612

Freehold

The Parish Council own and operate the cemetery in Church Lane which includes a War Memorial.

The Pound – Pound Lane, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: Not known

Purchase price: Not known

Unique Property Reference No: Not known

Map reference: E540172 N270603

Freehold

The Landing Ground – Bridge Farm, Earith Road, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: Not known

Purchase Price: Not known

Unique Property Reference No: 100091420856 (Bridge farm)

Map reference: E540633 N273279

Freehold

The Green – Green Street, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: Not known

Purchase Price: Not known

Unique Property Reference No: 10090708791

Map reference: E540666 N270486

Freehold

The village Green is located on the junction of Green Street and Church Street. There is a village pump and a village sign located on the Green. The Green is the location for the fair during Feast Week in October.

Public Hall – The High Street, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: 1896

Purchase Price: Donated

Unique Property Reference No: 10003189029

Map reference: E540237 N270406

Freehold

The Public Hall is owned by the Parish Council and is leased on a 10-year lease to the Public Hall User Committee. The lease is due for renewal in 2025

Public Open Space Pyrethrum Way – Pyrethrum Way, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: Not known

Purchase Price: Not known

Unique Property Reference No: Not known

Map reference: E540617 N270120

Freehold

The Council adopted and maintains the public open space on Pyrethrum Way

Long Pond – Rampton Road, Willingham

Date Purchased: Not known

Purchase Price: Not known

Unique Property Reference no: Not Known

Map reference: E540874 N270081

Freehold

Barton's Field – Black Pit Drove, Willingham

Date Purchased: Donated February 2021

Purchase price: Not applicable

Unique property reference:

Map reference: E540751 N269069

Freehold

The field was donated by a parishioner and is used as open public space for parishioners. It has a small wooded area top and bottom and several fruit trees planted throughout the site. Pedestrian access only is via Black Pit Drove

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023 – 2024

INCOME **As Budget stat**

Precept **£166,600**

Green & Boundaries **£100**

Leisure & Amenities **£969**

Halls **£12,621**

Cemetery **£3,461**

Establishments **£0**

Willingham Hub **£0**

Section 106 **£20,120**

Interest Received **£3,927**

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£207,798

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EXPENDITURE

Green & Boundaries **£8,259**

Leisure & Amenities **£23,022**

Halls **£26,327**

Cemetery **£12,546**

Establishments **£39,961**

Salaries **£60,986**

Insurance **£6,138**

Willingham Hub **£102**

General reserves **£0**

Section 106 **£0**

Section 137

Piper Lifeline **£2,858**

Donations **£16,129**

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£196,328

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INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE **£11,470**

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DEFIBRILLATORS

The Parish Council continue to maintain and manage their three defibrillators located around the village. The units are located at the following locations and access is given by the emergency services during a 999 call if needed.

- the pavilion on West Fen Road
- the library on Church Street
- the telephone box on the Hight Street



PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT DETAILS

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