

TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT

May 2024

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

This is my first introduction to Tilehurst Parish Council's annual report having been elected as Chairman of the new council in May 2023. My predecessor Councillor Kevin Page stood down from the council last year after a long period of service and four years as its Chairman, and I would like to thank Kevin for guiding the council through a period of considerable change and for the strong leadership he provided. Kevin is still Chairman of the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group, a very important role which will help shape Tilehurst Parish's future.

The current year started with a new council which was elected unopposed as there were fewer nominations than the maximum 18 councillors permitted. In the summer, Julie Slevin resigned as a councillor and, in early 2024, Theresa Downes also stood down as a councillor and as Vice Chairman of the Parish Council. We were extremely sad to lose them as they were both active members of the council, who will be greatly missed.

During the year, we have co-opted a number of new councillors, but there are still eight vacancies to be filled. If you are interested in becoming a Parish Councillor, please contact the Parish Clerk by e-mailing clerk@tilehurstparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Despite our shortfall of councillors, the past year saw many highlights and achievements:

- In May 2023 we celebrated the coronation of King Charles III with a public event at Turnhams Farm Recreation Ground comprising an afternoon of music, side shows, trade and charity stalls, refreshments and children's entertainment. The weather wasn't kind, but attendance was good and it was a great success. Special thanks go to Councillor Julie Slevin and Jacky Major, the Parish Clerk, who organised the event with a small committee within a few weeks.
- We continued our Youth Services programme with our partners Berkshire Youth. This included the successful Thursday Youth Club at the Jubilee Annexe in Calcot, Tuesday and Thursday sports sessions at Cotswold Sports Centre, detached youth work at all our recreation grounds, and an extended "Sports in the Parks" initiative. There is more about our youth work later in this report.
- The Over-50's club set up by the Parish Council in 2022 became an independently run club from September 2023 and still runs in the Jubilee Annexe every Tuesday afternoon. Three Parish Councillors are currently on its management committee.

TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

- We increased our staffing levels during the year which has helped reduce backlogs and ensure the more efficient running of both our office, facilities and maintenance functions.
- Major improvements to our recreation grounds were undertaken. In the spring of 2023, we installed our first outdoor gym at Turnhams Farm recreation ground and later in the year we installed a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) providing football and netball facilities, together with an outdoor gym, social area, children's cycle track at Cotswold recreation ground. In spring 2024, we replaced some old items in the play area at Calcot recreation ground. There is more information our projects later in this report, but special thanks go to Councillor and Vice Chairman of Council Theresa Downes for her outstanding work in managing these projects.
- The Tilehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan made considerable progress in 2023 and a final draft was approved by the Parish Council. A final review by West Berkshire Council and a Planning Examiner will commence shortly and we expect the plan to go to referendum within the next 12 months.
- A weekly foodbank started in the Jubilee Annexe in late 2023, and our four halls remain in regular daily use by a wide variety of groups, including cubs, scouts, brownies, sports and dance groups, events, parties and I know all are widely valued by our community.

Finally, I would like to thank all our councillors, who are all unpaid, for their contribution to the above and to the running of the council and also to our tremendous staff team led by Jacky Major who ensures that our services to residents are maintained to the highest level.

I look forward to a challenging but successful 2024/25 and if you have any comments or questions on this report please get in touch.

*Councillor Clive Taylor
Chairman of Tilehurst Parish Council*

ABOUT TILEHURST



The Civil Parish of Tilehurst is in West Berkshire, to the west of Reading. It extends from the A4 in the south almost to the A329 in the north. The boundary with Reading Borough Council forms the eastern border, and its western edge follows the line of the Sulham escarpment.

The parish was created in 1919 and now covers an area of 11 square miles. It has a population of around 14,500, with an electorate of approximately 11,100.

The Parish Council owns and manages four recreation grounds, four community halls (at three sites), and five play areas. The parish's sports centre and two further plots of land are leased to West Berkshire District Council to meet education and social service needs in the local area.

TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

PARISH COUNCIL FACILITIES

Parish Office

There have been some changes in the Parish Office over the course of the year.

In late August 2023, we welcomed two new members of staff to the team: Paul as an Assistant Maintenance Officer, and Mark as the Facilities Assistant. Both roles are part-time with each being 25 hours per week.

This means the Clerk now has a team of five: two part-time Administrative Assistants, a full-time and a part-time Assistant Maintenance Officer, and a part-time Facilities Assistant.

There were only three desks and computers in the office, so an office reorganisation was needed in order to accommodate Mark. As a result, the IT and telephone systems have been upgraded, and everything is now working much more smoothly. We were fortunate enough to have been donated some office furniture in May 2023, and we were able to do some rearranging to fit in a new desk, so now we just need to find time to transfer paperwork, brochures, and so on to new filing cupboards.

When the work is complete, we will have some spare furniture (desks, pedestals, filing cabinets); if anyone knows of a charity or organisation which might be able to use them, please contact the Parish Office.

Halls

The Parish Council owns and manages four halls in the parish. There are two, the Main Hall and the Jubilee Annexe, at Highview, Calcot, Turnhams Farm Hall on Little Heath Road, and the Cornwell Centre at Clements Mead. Each hall is next to a recreation ground and all four are available to hire for regular weekly sessions or for parties and events at weekends.

Between them, our halls now host a range of regular community support groups, including:

- carer support and dementia awareness sessions run by AgeUK;
- monthly meetings of Motor Neurone Disease Association;
- free Get Berkshire Active seated exercise classes;
- blood donor sessions;
- cubs, scouts, guides and brownies;
- Sea Scouts from November to April;
- two of our halls have been used as Polling Stations;
- there is a weekly foodbank on Monday afternoons in the Jubilee Annexe at Calcot.

Further information about each of the halls, as well as the current hall hire charges, may be found on our web site - www.tilehurstparishcouncil.gov.uk – under Parish Amenities.

TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

Recreation grounds

In April 2023, a local resident donated a tree to the parish. It was planted at Turnhams Farm recreation ground to replace a tree which had died. The new tree is thriving.



Unfortunately, there are still instances of antisocial behaviour at the recreation grounds:

- Graffiti has had to be removed or painted over on the skate park, the changing rooms, and the fire door at Turnhams Farm.
- The flooring in the play area and around items of equipment at Cotswold is continues to be pulled up and used as a ramp for bikes.
- A bench in the copse had to be removed after it was burned and then covered in graffiti.

There was an instance of someone using the large bins at Cotswold to dump commercial waste and debris. As the rubbish included addressed letters, a letter was written and, thankfully, the problem stopped.

There continues to be a problem with people bringing bags of rubbish to the recreation grounds and filling the bins. In cases where the offenders can be identified, letters are written and this does seem to help.

St Michael's Churchyard, Tilehurst

The churchyard on New Lane Hill has no capacity for further burials, so it is deemed "closed". In February 2017, the Parish Council agreed to take on responsibility and costs for general maintenance of the site. This includes grass cutting, fences and tree work, but excludes the lychgate (roofed gateway entrance) and the graves themselves. The Parish Council budgets £12,500 per year for Churchyard maintenance, and the Clerk liaises regularly with the Churchwardens and the Rector over maintenance work to be carried out.

Integration @ iCollege (previously Badger's Hill Pupil Referral Unit)

In September 2022, as part of WBC's investment in alternative education provision, work started on building a brand-new learning centre on a parish council-owned site at Highview, Calcot. The £2.2 million project was completed and the brand-new Badgers Hill Integration facility reopened to learners in September 2023. Heather Codling, WBC's Executive Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services officially opened it in October.

Footpaths

Any issues or concerns about public footpaths or rights of way should be reported to West Berkshire Council, www.westberks.gov.uk.

TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

Environment

Over the past year, one of the streetlamps owned and maintained by the Parish Council has been replaced with a new LED lamp.

As a parish council, we always like to find ways to look after the environment so, when a regular check of chairs in the halls found that the cushions and pads on some were worn, ripped or broken, we took all the usable parts to create as many whole chairs as possible. Once this had been done and the completely worn-out pads had been thrown away, we had a few of the bare metal chair frames left over.



Rather than throw them away, the maintenance officers repurposed the frames to carry out improvements and repairs to other items.



The trolley used to move stacks of chairs in the Main Hall at Calcot was difficult to use as the back legs of some chairs could fall down and rub against the trolley's wheels. A chair frame was used to make a stop to keep the chairs high enough over the wheels to prevent this happening.

Other chairs were used to make new frames for two grilles on the Jubilee Annexe.



The original frames had broken, so people could throw things behind the grilles, damaging the fans. The new frames anchor the grilles more securely to the wall to protect the fans behind them.



TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

COMMUNITY

Support

The Parish Council continues to support various groups in the community by allowing them to use parish sites for events:

- Barton Rovers Football Club used Turnhams Farm recreation ground and changing rooms for its Annual Tournament in July
- Westwood Farm Community Association held its Easter Farm in April at Cotswold recreation ground
- Westwood Wanderers Football Club held its annual Presentation Day at Cotswold recreation ground in July
- Motor Neurone Disease Association held a Ray of Hope Fun Day in June at Cotswold recreation ground

The Parish Council also receives applications for donations and, after consideration, might make an award to groups which benefit the community (the amount donated must be commensurate with the amount of benefit). In March 2024, the following donations were awarded:

- A donation of £500 was made to Tilehurst Junior Youth Club
- Age UK Reading received a £1,000 donation
- Additionally, Age UK Berkshire's MCST group was given a 20% discount on hall hires



In Spring 2023, parish councillors and volunteers arranged a “picnic in the park” event to mark the coronation of King Charles III.

It was held on the afternoon of Saturday 6 May at Turnhams Farm recreation ground and there were stalls, family activities, workshops, and a fairy trail.

Entertainment was provided by a bubble-ologist while a one-man band played music, and the recreation ground was decorated with a “King’s Mile” of bunting which had been made by local people, community groups and schools. Despite the weather being much wetter and colder than expected, the event was well attended.

TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

During the month of September, West Berkshire Council gave away free compostable food caddy liners in its libraries. Tilehurst Parish Council staff heard about this and offered to act as a local collection point for the liners. This proved popular with people coming in for their roll of liners not only from the Parish of Tilehurst, but also from neighbouring parishes.

There are still a few liners available, and any parishioner who would like a roll is welcome to pick one up from Parish Office between 9.00am and 3.00pm on weekdays.

In autumn 2023, Sulham Estate and BioCap gave presentations in Pangbourne and in Purley on Thames about future plans to meet new government initiatives for biodiversity and the environment. Tilehurst Parish Council arranged a further presentation in Calcot on Thursday 25 January 2024, notices were put in noticeboards and on the Parish Councils' website, and flyers were put delivered to houses in the Parish of Tilehurst which were adjacent to the sites.

The estate is looking at a 30-year timeframe to deal with three areas locally: Railway Field (on the A329 just outside Pangbourne), Sadler's Farm and Stoneham's Farm. The last is the largest site, and a diverse mosaic of habitats – including coppicing, a walnut orchard, and cattle grazing – is planned there. Existing footpaths will be maintained and, later on, there might be opportunities to add new paths so that people can see the wildlife.

Further information and updates may be found on [Biocap's web site](#).

Policing

The Clerk continues to have regular meetings with PCSOs and police officers. Police representatives also participate in the Youth and Community Safety working group which meets to discuss crime and anti-social behaviour in the parish, particularly on our recreation grounds.

Thames Valley Police is currently carrying out an operation to tackle ongoing issues of anti-social behaviour at Cotswold recreation ground.

TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

Youth work

In March 2023 Tilehurst Parish Council entered into a further one-year contract with Berkshire Youth, a Berkshire based charity which helps and supports young people through leisure and personal development initiatives. The Parish Council increased its budget to £30,000 to cover this youth work. This funding has enabled continuation of the Thursday evening Youth Club at the Jubilee Annexe which has run throughout the past year and caters for a 12-15 year age group. The club now has a group of "young leaders" who have reached the maximum age limit but who volunteer to help run the youth club including the club tuck shop and weekly activities.

At the Cotswold Sports Centre, the "Cotswold Kicks" sessions have extended to two per week and our "Sports in the Parks" sessions were extended to cover Easter and Spring half term as well as the Summer holidays. All these services are planned to continue through 2024/25 as we have committed to a further one-year contract with Berkshire Youth to end March 2025.

Detached youth work will also continue in our parks and retail areas aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour. This work is extended for 2024 thanks to additional funding raised from the Thames Valley Community Fund. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chief Constable are able to use money raised from the sale of items which come into the possession of the police and where details of the owner can not be ascertained (for example, stolen or lost property) to make grants and donations to local charitable organisations and local community groups. In autumn 2023, the Parish Council submitted a bid to the Fund for a grant to extend Berkshire Youth's detached youth work around Calcot recreation ground. The application was successful and an award of £2,464.00 was received.

We are grateful to our volunteer team who help run all these services alongside our Berkshire Youth assigned youth worker, Jessica Kirby, who under a WBC contract also works within our secondary schools at Denefield and Little Heath.

Looking ahead, we have plans to open at least one further youth club for the 15-18 age group during 2024 and to expand our youth services further but this is subject to an outstanding funding application.

A further youth initiative with a youth film production organisation is in progress and about to start at the Calcot Centre in spring 2024. This will involve young people making a film about Tilehurst.

If you are interested in volunteering to help run our youth services or enrolling young people to attend our clubs, please get in touch.

Councillor Clive Taylor

TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

Projects

Feedback from a youth survey carried out in 2021 suggested that outdoor gyms and areas where young people could meet and relax safely would be popular. As a result, the Parish Council has undertaken two projects.

In June 2023, the first gym, a “Big Rig” was installed between the hall and the children’s play area at Turnhams Farm recreation ground and immediately proved very popular with users of all ages.



The Big Rig combines eight individual workout stations for 16+ users at once, and the style of equipment includes both traditional gym and calisthenic workout capability. The equipment is suitable for all abilities, from complete beginners to advanced gym goers, aged 11+.

The second project was at Cotswold recreation ground where the old tarmacked base was re-purposed to create a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), an outdoor gym, a social area with swings and picnic tables. Following consultations with local residents, the design was changed to address some concerns, and a children’s cycle track was added.

The funding for this project came from a WBC grant which was match-funded by the Parish Council. The contractor, Koolplay Ltd, was appointed in June 2023, and was involved



in consultations and discussions over the summer. Work onsite started on Monday 13 November and, despite some bad weather and unforeseen issues during installation, was completed by mid-December.

The work was signed off on Thursday 21 December, after which there was an official opening attended by (left to right in photograph) District Councillor Janine Lewis, Executive Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside, June Felix of Koolplay Ltd, Parish Councillor Theresa Downes, Vice Chairman of Tilehurst Parish Council and project lead, Parish Councillor Clive Taylor, Chairman of Tilehurst Parish Council, who cut a ribbon at the entrance to the MUGA, and Jacky Major, Clerk to Tilehurst Parish Council (not shown).



TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

In March 2024, some of the older, more worn-out equipment in the play area at Calcot recreation ground was removed and new play items were installed. The new items were a large horse springer, a seesaw springer, a two-bay swing with basket, cradle and flat seats, seesaw and climbing igloo. Funding for the project came from a Members' Bid from West Berkshire Council and money held within Parish Council reserves.

The contractors arrived on Wednesday 13 March to set up the site and start removing the obsolete items and all their foundations. The new equipment had been installed by early April, but there were then delays caused by the



weather and other issues (including a broken van). Work was also interrupted by the long Easter weekend, but it was completed and signed off on Wednesday 10 April following a successful post-installation inspection. The play area was reopened on Thursday 11 April when the flooring had set firm, and it is hoped it will be enjoyed by many local children.

Future projects

The Parish Council is currently considering the possibility of refurbishing the play area at Hilden's Drive and will carry out a preliminary consultation in due course.

The path behind Cotswold Sports Centre, from Downs Way to Warbreck Drive, is very dark and difficult to use at times, so the Parish Council is looking into the option of installing solar lights along it. It is also possible that the path itself will be resurfaced as it has been damaged by tree roots and stumps.

Consideration is being given to repairing the walls and fencing to the front of St Michael's Churchyard.

TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

PLANNING

Tilehurst Parish Council is consulted on all planning applications in the parish and, over the course of a year, will review and comment on around 100 applications.

In May 2023, there was an application for a 70+ housing development at Calcot Golf Course to enable the building of a new clubhouse. The Parish Council was aware of considerable public interest in this application so held a special planning meeting to consider it and to receive representations from members of the public, the developer and the golf club. Following the meeting, the Parish Council objected on several grounds including the outstanding proposed designation of this land as Local Green Space through the Tilehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan, insufficient affordable housing, traffic issues on New Lane Hill and wildlife/environmental concerns.

The application was withdrawn in September 2023. A new application has not yet been submitted.

Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

Having completed the "Regulation 14" public consultation at the end of 2022, the Steering Group started 2023 by reviewing every comment and updating the Draft NDP. There were no significant changes to the vision and policies in the plan, which were generally well supported in the feedback. We also took the opportunity to make the document easier to follow and simplified some areas which had caused confusion, as well as clarifying the justification for the proposed designation of Local Green Spaces.

In addition to the NDP itself, the Steering Group was required to submit two supporting documents, both of which have been completed:

- "Consultation Statement" describes the steps taken to engage with the local community throughout the development of the NDP and how feedback has been incorporated; and
- "Basic Conditions Statement" explains how the NDP meets legal requirements necessary for adoption.

Unfortunately, a number of events conspired against swift completion of the NDP, including uncertainty around WBC's Local Plan and organisational changes within WBC's planning department. Despite this, the documentation has been submitted to WBC and responsibility for taking the process forward now lies with WBC. There will be a further consultation and independent examination. If successful at the examination stage, there will be a referendum which will be your opportunity to have your say on whether the NDP should become part of the statutory development plan for the area.

The Parish Council would like to thank the volunteers who have worked tirelessly on the NDP for almost ten years. They have been organised, thorough and tenacious. We're looking forward to the next steps on its journey towards the referendum.

*Kevin Page
Chairman of the NDP Steering Group*

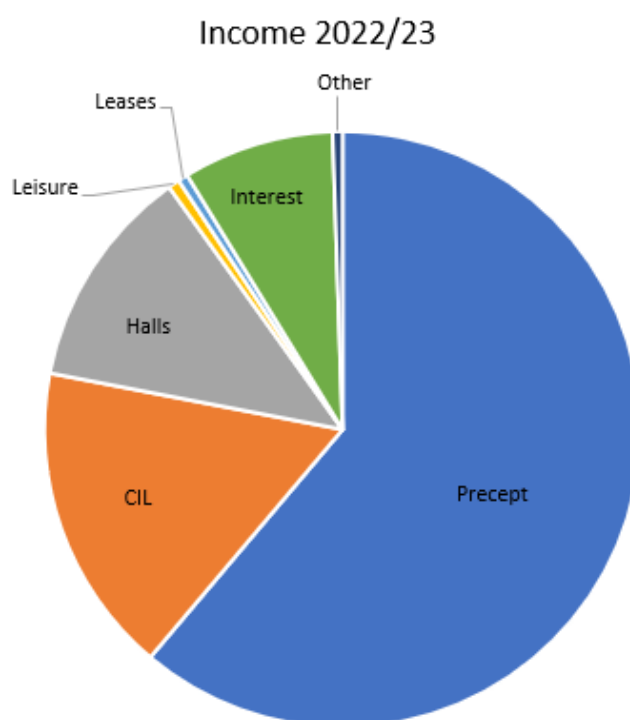
TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

COUNCIL FINANCES

Tilehurst Parish Council income and expenditure 2023/24

Income	£	%
Precept	306,234	61.15
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and grants	84,504	16.88
Hall lettings	60,521	12.09
Leisure and recreation (football pitch hire)	3,122	0.62
Leases and miscellaneous income	2,676	0.53
Interest received	41,038	4.48
Other services income	2,664	0.53
Total	500,759	100.00



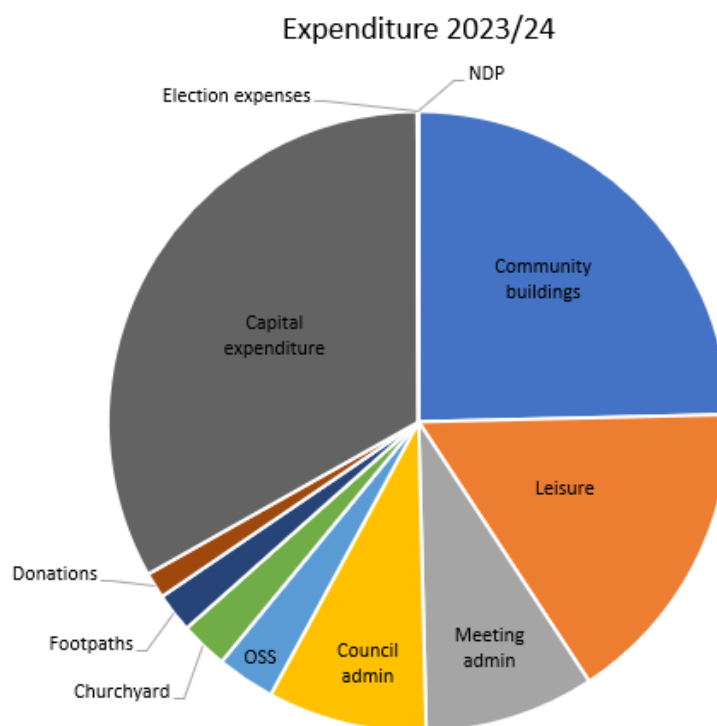
Precept – This is the part of the Council Tax bill which funds the services provided by the Parish Council. For the 2023/24 financial year, the precept (annual charge) was £54.53 per Band D household. For 2024/25, this will increase to £56.74.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – This is a charge which can be levied by local authorities on new developments to help fund the necessary infrastructure, facilities and services – such as schools or transport improvements – needed to support the new homes and businesses. Where an eligible development is within parish, part of the CIL receipts must be passed by the charging authority (West Berkshire Council) to the relevant parish council who must spend it on the provision, improvement, replacement or maintenance of infrastructure or anything else concerned with addressing the demands new development places on an area.

TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

Expenditure	£	%
Maintenance of community buildings	127,377	24.62
Leisure and recreation	83,430	16.13
Administration of council and committee meetings	45,831	8.86
Council administration (excluding staff costs)	42,885	8.29
Other specialised services (OSS) (ie contract with Berkshire Youth)	15,714	3.04
Upkeep of St Michael's Churchyard	12,860	2.49
Footpaths and street lighting	10,651	2.06
Donations to local organisations and discounted hall use	7,003	1.35
Capital expenditure (ie play equipment)	171,167	33.09
Election expenses	240	0.04
Production of Neighbourhood Development Plan	146	0.03
Total	517,304	100.00



Staff – All the above expenditure includes the costs of staff required to deliver the services. This gives an accurate overview of the cost of each function.

Cotswold Sports Centre – West Berkshire Council leases the Sports Centre from the Parish Council and, as part of the Lease Agreement, the Parish Council contributes 50% of the deficit in running costs. This year, that payment amounted to £17,285.

Internal Interim Audit – It is a statutory requirement for all parish councils to have regular independent internal audit examinations of their accounting records and systems of internal control. Our interim, mid-year internal audit for the 2023/24 financial took place in October and the report was issued shortly afterwards. There were no areas of concern, and the Clerk and her staff were commended for the quality of the records.

TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

THE PARISH COUNCIL

Tilehurst Parish Council is made up three separate wards and can have up to 18 councillors in total. Councillors receive no payment, and have four main areas of work:

- Decision-making (through attending meetings);
- Monitoring to ensure decisions are carried out;
- Being involved in the local community; and
- Taking the lead role on Parish Council projects and initiatives.

Current councillors as at May 2024 are:

Ward	Councillor
Tilehurst North (maximum eight councillors)	Mrs Rose Reynolds Mrs Rosie Braine Mr Oluwafemi Aliu Mr Robert Loaring
Tilehurst Central (maximum nine councillors)	Mr Clive Taylor Chairman Mr Nigel Furlong-King Mrs Pippa Furlong-King Ms Joanne Stewart Vice Chairman Mrs Helen Manghnani
Tilehurst Calcot (maximum one councillor)	Mrs Sandra Vickers

This means we currently have eight vacancies which can be filled by co-option. Anyone who would like to know more about the role or who wishes to apply should contact the Clerk by e-mailing clerk@tilehurstparishcouncil.gov.uk or calling 0118 941 8833.

TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of Birch Copse, Calcot, Denefield and Westwood

Parish Council Meetings

Full Council meetings are held from 7.30pm on the second Tuesday of each month in the Main Hall, Calcot. The current schedule, to May 2025, is shown below.

SCHEDULE OF FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS		
	2024	2025
January	9	14
February	13	11
March	12	11
April	9	8
May	14	13
June	11	
July	9	
August	13	
September	10	
October	8	
November	12	
December	10	

All Parish Council meetings and Committee meetings are open to the public, and every meeting has an allocated time for questions or statements from members of the public. It is helpful if anyone planning to attend advises the Clerk in advance.

Agendas and minutes of meetings may be found on the Parish Council's web site – www.tilehurstparishcouncil.gov.uk

Parish Office

The office is open Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 3.00pm (excluding bank holidays), and members of the public are welcome to visit or ring during those times.

The Parish Office is at Highview, Calcot, Reading RG31 4XD, and the telephone number is 0118 941 8833.

