

TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

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

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT

May 2023

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

It's hard to believe it's already a year since the last annual report. The past 12 months have been very busy for the Parish Council and have flown by.

Despite challenging times, we have kept on top of the essentials, ensuring community resources such as our halls, recreation grounds and play areas are maintained and fit for purpose; managing our finances to provide value for money; and investing in the future of the parish.

In addition, we have made good progress on a number of initiatives. You'll see details of these later in this report but I'd just like to highlight a few:

- The Jubilee Annexe had its first full year of service and it is good to see how quickly it has become a popular venue with hirers;
- The over 50s Coffee Club in the Jubilee Annexe has made a promising start, and we look forward to the prospect of it becoming an independent group run by its members;
- Our partnership with Berkshire Youth has enabled us to expand the range of facilities and opportunities for young people in the area, with a really encouraging take-up rate;
- We have started a big refurbishment programme for our play areas and recreation grounds, replacing and adding equipment including outdoor gym facilities;
- Work on the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan reached a significant milestone with the "Regulation 14" public consultation – an important step on the road to giving the community a say in the type and location of development that happens here.

I would like to thank our Parish Clerk, Jacky Major, and her hard-working, patient and friendly team for keeping things running smoothly despite many challenges through the year. The growing ambition of the council has added to their responsibilities, and they have coped magnificently with additional stresses including the economic situation, longer-term impact of the pandemic, occasional outbreaks of vandalism and the impact of a changing climate. We are looking to expand the team and realign roles better to fit the changing role of the council in the coming year.

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I would also like to thank all the Parish Councillors for their contribution and leadership, particularly those stepping down at the elections in May. Parish Councillors are unpaid and juggle the demands of the role representing their community with busy family lives and full-time jobs.

Finally, this will be my last annual report as Chairman of Tilehurst Parish Council. After 14 years as a Parish Councillor and four years in the role of Chairman, I have reluctantly decided to step away to spend more time with my family and career. It has been an honour and a privilege to have worked with a great team in the service of our residents. It has been a tough decision. There is still so much more the Council could be doing to improve the lives of our local community. But I have every confidence that the councillors taking their place in May, working together with Jacky's team and, most importantly, with your support, will be able to achieve great things. I'm looking forward to reading next year's annual report already!

Councillor Kevin Page
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 and four community halls (at three sites). 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.

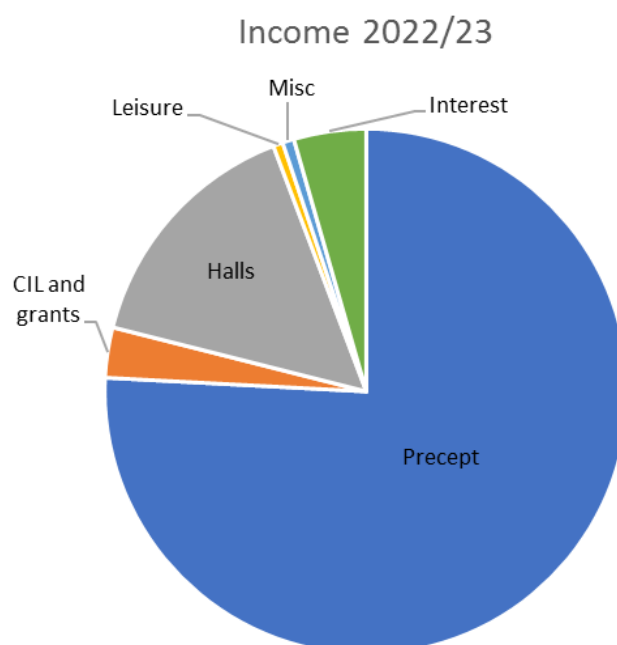
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COUNCIL FINANCES

Tilehurst Parish Council income and expenditure 2022/23

Income	£	%
Precept	284,585	75.84
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and grants	11,597	3.10
Hall lettings	57,347	15.28
Leisure and recreation (football pitch hire)	2,260	0.60
Leases and miscellaneous income	2,660	0.70
Interest received	16,794	4.48
Total	375,243	100.00



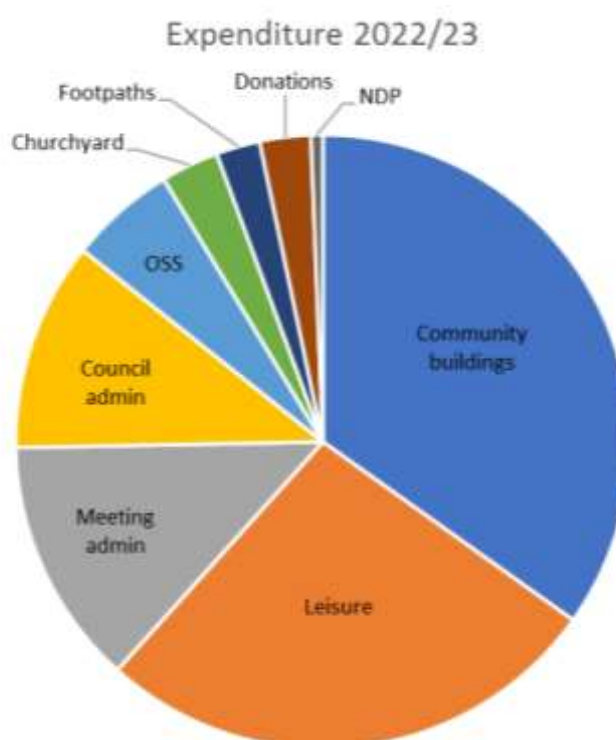
Precept – This is the part of the Council Tax bill which funds the services provided by Tilehurst Parish Council. For the 2022/23 financial year, the precept (annual charge) for a Band D household was unchanged at £51.20. The Parish Council has, however, decided to increase it for the 2023/24 (ie current) financial year to £55.00 per Band D household.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – This is a charge which can be levied by local authorities on new development in their area in order to raise funds needed to provide the infrastructure, facilities and services – such as schools or transport improvements – needed to support the new homes and businesses. Where a 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 development places on an area. Over the next few months, Tilehurst Parish Council will consider how to use CIL funds it currently holds so as to benefit residents.

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Expenditure	£	%
Maintenance of community buildings	109,014	34.86
Leisure and recreation	83,813	26.81
Administration of council and committee meetings	40,814	13.03
Council administration (excluding staff costs)	23,409	11.03
Other specialised services (OSS) (ie contract with Berkshire Youth)	17,485	5.60
Upkeep of St Michael's Churchyard	9,537	3.05
Footpaths and street lighting	7,249	2.31
Donations to local organisations and discounted hall use	8,328	2.69
Production of Neighbourhood Development Plan	1,918	0.62
Total	364,393	100.00



Staff costs – There is no separate figure as all staff costs are set against activities carried out by the Parish Council so the costs of, say, maintaining the buildings includes any associated staff costs.

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 £15,274.

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 2022-23 financial took place in October, with the report being issued shortly afterwards. All findings were extremely positive; it is very reassuring to find that our systems are robust and that our team has been able to continue working well together through another very difficult and challenging year.

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PARISH COUNCIL FACILITIES

Halls

The newly refurbished Jubilee Annexe at Calcot was officially opened in late April 2022, so has now been available for hire for a year.

The new hall has proved very popular and, as well as already having its own regular hirers, it has become the base for a youth centre run by Berkshire Youth on behalf of the parish council.



In June 2022, two Parish Councillors with help from residents started a new Over 50s Coffee Club in the Jubilee Annexe. The club was set up and run on a trial basis on behalf of the Parish Council; its purpose was to offer an opportunity for older residents in the community, particularly those who might feel isolated after Covid-19 lockdowns, to come together for company and mutual support. Going forward, it is hoped that the club's members will be able to establish the coffee club as an independent, self-sustaining venture. The Over-50s Coffee Club runs from 2.00pm to 4.00pm every Tuesday, and there is a small attendance charge to cover costs.

As well as the usual weekly hires and one-off party bookings, our halls now host a range of regular community support groups, including:

- Carer support and dementia awareness sessions run by AgeUK;
- NHS workshops and lifestyle guidance for diabetics;
- English language lessons for foreign refugees;
- Some blood donor sessions have re-started after Covid;
- Sea Scouts from November to April as their previous venue is no longer available.

Recreation grounds

Unfortunately, as a result of long-term ongoing problems including antisocial behaviour and graffiti, one of the youth shelters at Cotswold recreation ground has had to be removed. The shelter will be refurbished before being installed either at Cotswold again or, if that does not seem feasible, at one of the other recreation grounds in the parish (Calcot, Cornwell, Turnhams Farm).

A new mini recycling centre is being trialled in the overflow car park at the Cotswold Sports Centre. The centre is situated on Parish Council land which is rented to West Berkshire Council who own and maintain the bins. Although, the new facility quickly proved very popular with residents, recently there has been an escalation of issues with inappropriate items being fly-tipped, and the locks on the Parish Council's bins being forced.

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We have litter bins on our recreation grounds for use by those enjoying the facilities. However, over the past year or so, there has been an increasing issue of people bringing bags of rubbish from their homes and dumping them in the bins on our recreation grounds. This means the bins are then too full for recreation ground users, so there's an increase in littering (sometimes, simply because rubbish falls back out of the overfilled bins).



A local resident had donated a memorial bench to be installed at Turnhams Farm recreation ground. After some discussion, a suitable location was agreed, and the new bench was put in place in October 2022.

Environment

Over the past year, all the lighting in the parish office has been changed to LED, which is more energy-efficient, environmentally friendly and cost-effective than the old halogen lights. Other buildings will also be converted as new lighting becomes necessary, and the hall at the Cornwell Centre is the first to have had some lights changed to LED.

Similarly, some of the old halogen street lamps owned and maintained by the Parish Council have also been changed to LED.

Footpaths

In spring 2022, West Berkshire Council contacted the Parish Council as it was considering refurbishing three footpaths in the parish. Office staff, assisted by a very knowledgeable parish resident, looked into the locations and condition of each of the paths and agreed the refurbishment would be beneficial, and the works were carried out over the summer. As a result of the investigation, another footpath has also been added to the list for future review and improvement.

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

Badger's Hill Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

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 new building at Highview in Calcot will provide a modern, purpose-built space for pupils who find it difficult to access mainstream education - it will replace the current facility which is now too small and no longer suitable for delivering the full curriculum.

Work is expected to take up to a year, and the modern, purpose-built space is scheduled to open to pupils in September 2023.

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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 for its Annual Tournament
- Westwood Farm Community Association holds its Easter Farm at Cotswold recreation ground and also held an event to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee there
- Westwood Pre-school playgroup will hold its summer fayre at Cotswold recreation ground in June

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):

- A donation of £500 was made to Tilehurst Junior Youth Club
- A donation of £500 was made to Westwood Wanderers Football Club
- Age UK Reading received a £1,000 donation
- A donation of £1,000 was made to Reading Welfare Rights.

A further donation of £500 was made to West Berkshire Council's library service.

Additionally, 2022 marked the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II and the Parish Council put aside £1,000 to assist local organisations and groups who arranged celebration events from Thursday 2 to Sunday 5 June 2022.

Towards the end of July 2022, there was a severe house fire in Red Cottage Drive, Calcot. The properties affected were in the neighbouring parish of Holybrook, and a WBC District Councillor and a Tilehurst Parish Council worked together to set up and run the committee room at the Calcot Centre as a collection/distribution point for donations to the families affected. The Chairman of Holybrook Parish Council formally thanked Tilehurst Parish Council for its neighbourliness and support at a time of crisis.

Policing

The Clerk continues to meet regularly with PCSOs and police officers who also participate in the Youth and Community Safety Working Party which meets to discuss crime and anti-social behaviour on our recreation grounds. The CCTV which was enhanced and improved last year is proving very helpful in helping the police identify and apprehend offenders.

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Youth work

In March 2022, the 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. It also allocated a budget of £20,000 to youth work around the parish.

As a result of this commitment, during the year, a weekly art club was run in the Jubilee Annexe during June and July 2022, weekly “Cotswold Kicks” footballing sessions have been held at the Cotswold Sports Centre, there were multi-sport sessions at Cotswold, Cornwell and Turnhams Farm recreation grounds over the summer, and a weekly youth club started in the Jubilee Annexe from September. There has also continued to be some detached youth work around the parish.

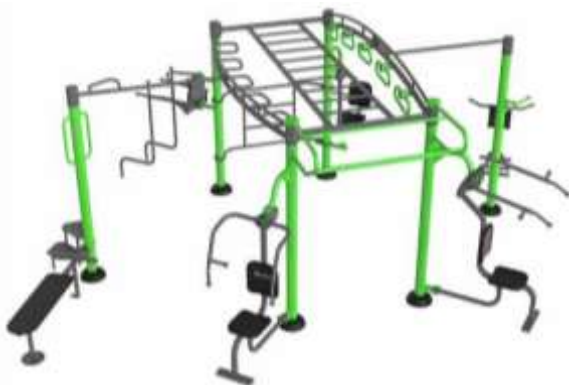
The sessions provided have proved very popular overall, so the Parish Council has agreed to renew its contract with Berkshire Youth for a further year, to March 2024. Over the coming year, term-time activities will include the youth club in the Jubilee Annexe at Calcot, and Cotswold Kicks sessions at Cotswold Sports Centre. During the Easter, May half-term and Summer school holidays, “Sports in the Park” sessions will be held at all four parish recreation grounds: Cotswold, Cornwell, Turnhams Farm and Calcot.

Volunteers – as the provision offered to young people in Tilehurst expands, more volunteers are needed to help run the activities. Further information about this opportunity may be found on the [Parish Council’s web site](#).

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 council has undertaken two projects.

In spring 2023, the first gym will be installed at Turnhams Farm recreation ground.



The “Big Rig” is suitable for all abilities from complete beginners to advanced gym goers, age 11+.

It combines eight individual workout stations for 16+ users at once, and the style of equipment includes both traditional gym and calisthenic workout capability.

The new equipment will be located between the hall and the children’s play area so as to limit the impact to other park users.

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The second project will take place at Cotswold recreation ground, where the old tarmacked base is to be re-purposed to create a Multi Use Games Area, an outdoor gym, and a social area with swings and picnic tables. The funding is from a West Berkshire Council grant which is being match-funded by the parish council. There is currently a shortlist of two possible contractors. The parish council will make the final selection in May, and it is intended that the new equipment will be in place by around October/November this year.

Future projects – at a meeting early in the new financial year, the Parish Council will review projects to be undertaken over the coming year. The decisions will be recorded in the minutes which will be made available on the web site.

PLANNING

Tilehurst Parish Council is consulted on all planning applications within our parish and over the course of the year will have reviewed well over 100 applications, often making comments and occasionally raising objections.

In April 2022, the Pincents Hill application for 165 houses came to the full West Berkshire Planning Committee for a second consideration despite being unanimously rejected at an earlier district planning meeting. At the meeting, Tilehurst Parish Council presented a comprehensive case for rejecting the proposed development and West Berks Council voted overwhelmingly to refuse the application. The applicant subsequently decided not to appeal that decision. West Berkshire Council is no longer promoting this site for future development so we hope to have achieved longer term protection of this important and much-loved green space.

Neighbourhood Development Plan

The Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Steering Group reached a significant milestone towards the end of 2022 with the “Regulation 14” public consultation on the draft plan. Public meetings were held and a survey launched to gather feedback, which was generally very supportive of the Plan. The steering group has reviewed every comment and is in the process of updating the draft. We are also working with West Berkshire Council (WBC) to plan the next steps but this is taking a little longer than expected because of organisational changes at the council, and its understandable focus on the WBC Local Plan submission.

We are looking forward to embarking on the next steps towards the referendum and (hopefully!) adoption of the Plan later in 2023. Before then, there will be further formal opportunities to give feedback and the Steering Group meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at the Cornwell Centre are open to the public. If you have comments or questions, we want to hear from you!

*Kevin Page
Chairman of the NDP Steering Group*

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THE PARISH COUNCIL

Tilehurst Parish Council is made up three separate wards and can have up to 18 councillors in total. Current councillors are:

Ward	Councillor
Tilehurst North (maximum eight councillors)	Mrs R Reynolds Mrs R Braine
Tilehurst Central (maximum nine councillors)	Mr C Taylor Chairman Mrs T Downes Vice Chairman Mr N Furlong-King Mrs J Slevin Mrs P Furlong-King
Tilehurst Calcot (maximum one councillor)	Mrs S Vickers

This means there are currently ten vacancies on the Parish Council as at May 2023 – these spaces can be filled by co-option and anyone who would like to know more about the role or who wishes to apply should please contact the Clerk by e-mailing clerk@tilehurstpc.co.uk or calling 0118 941 8833.

Members of the public are very welcome to attend Parish Council meetings, which are held on the second Tuesday of each month. Every meeting has an allocated time for questions or statements from members of the public. If you would like to attend a meeting or ask a question, it would be helpful to advise the Clerk in advance. Agendas and minutes of meetings may be found on the Parish Council's web site – www.tilehurstparishcouncil.gov.uk

