

# TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

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

## ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

**May 2025**

### CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

It has been a challenging year but, looking back, the Parish Council has many achievements although, as this report will show, there's still much to do. We started the year with ten parish councillors in post and, over the course of the year we have co-opted a further four. This means we currently have 14 of our possible 18 councillor places filled, more than in many years.

Although there is a requirement for everyone to attend monthly meetings regularly, parish councillors can have varying levels of involvement. At the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May 2024, I was elected Chairman of the Parish Council for a second year, and Councillor Jo Stewart became Vice Chairman – as we are both district councillors as well, quite a significant amount of our time is taken up one way or another by council business.

Other councillors serve on our Staffing committee or are members of one or more of our working groups, while some are involved in resolving local issues they feel strongly about. I remain passionate about youth services, and Tilehurst Parish has been at the forefront of West Berkshire parishes in providing youth clubs, sports in parks schemes and detached youth work, where we try to engage with young people in parks and other areas prone to antisocial behaviour. I take a direct interest in this as a registered volunteer with our youth service partners, Berkshire Youth. I am also a school governor at Calcot Schools.

In September 2024, in spite of feedback from both the district and parish councils, Reading Buses withdrew the part of the number 15 bus route which included the Calcot Estate, IKEA, Arlington Business Park and Theale. The loss of this service was felt by quite a few residents who became increasingly isolated so, in October, Parish Councillor Pippa Furlong-King chose to take on the task of trying to help those who were now struggling. She has had meetings with the CEO of Reading Buses, Reading Borough Councillor John Ennis, and with Olivia Bailey MP who raised the issue in Parliament and also arranged a survey of local residents. A solution has not yet been found but I would like to thank Pippa for all the time, effort and commitment she continues to give this campaign.

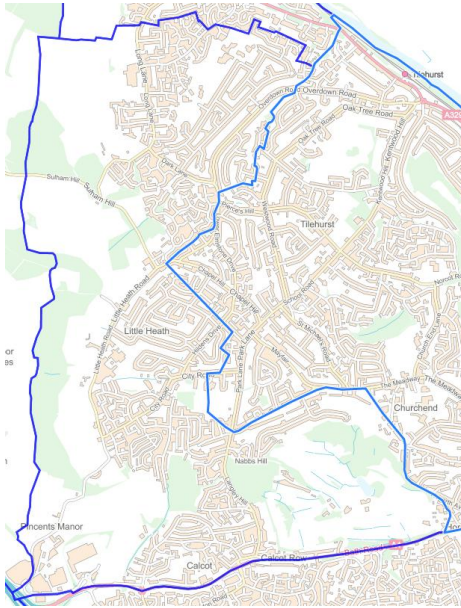
A full list of current parish councillors may be found at the end of this report, together with some information about the role. We do still have four vacancies, so please do contact the Clerk if you'd like to know more or might be interested in joining us. Members of the public are also welcome to attend meetings of full Council to find out a little more about what being a parish councillor involves.

***Councillor Clive Taylor***  
***Chairman of Tilehurst Parish Council***

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## ABOUT TILEHURST



The Civil Parish of Tilehurst lies on the eastern edge of West Berkshire and 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; it now covers an area of 11 square miles and has an electorate of around 11,100.

None of the landmarks associated with Tilehurst (such as the water tower, the triangle, and the war memorial) is actually in the parish, they are all in Reading.

Tilehurst 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.

## WHAT IS A PARISH COUNCIL

In England, a parish council is a civil authority which is the first tier of local government. As an elected corporate body, it carries out beneficial public activities in a geographical area, and is responsible to its electorate, ie the residents or parishioners.

Elections are held once every four years; the last one was in May 2023, so the next will be in May 2027. Councillors who are elected to office may sit for the full term of four years. If there are vacancies, new parish councillors may be co-opted at any time and they will normally serve until the following election. Parish councillors are not paid.

Most of a parish council's income comes from its precept which is a small proportion of the annual Council Tax paid by residents. Every year, each parish council estimates its income and expenditure for the next financial year and, from this, calculates the precept it needs. A request for that amount is then submitted to the relevant district council, which includes the precept for all parishes in its area in its annual Council Tax charge, together with funding for police, fire service, and the district council itself.

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## PARISH COUNCIL FACILITIES

### Parish Office

2024-25 has been another year of change in the Parish Office. We started the year with a full complement of staff: two part-time admin officers, one facilities assistant (also part-time), and two full-time maintenance officers, all supporting the Clerk. However, in the summer, the facilities assistant left quite suddenly meaning we were, once again, short-staffed. Since then, the rest of the team has pulled together and worked hard to keep things running smoothly, and the Clerk has been working to refine the facilities role further.

### Newsletter

A new Parish Council Newsletter is planned for the summer – the idea is that it will give information about the Parish Council's achievements and the challenges it faces, and this will help residents understand the work we're involved in. Hopefully, it might even encourage some residents to become more interested in parish work.

The first issue will be hard copy and will be delivered to every household in the parish (this is not straightforward as we have roads which are split with neighbouring parishes, or with Reading Borough Council), and residents will be invited to join a mailing list if they wish to receive further issues. Back copies will also be available to download from our web site.

The last time we had a newsletter was around ten years ago, so this is an exciting new venture.

### Halls

Tilehurst Parish Council owns and maintains four halls: the Main Hall and Jubilee Annexe in Calcot (there is also a smaller Committee Room); Turnhams Farm Hall (Little Heath Road) and the Cornwell Centre (Clements Mead) in Tilehurst. Each hall is adjacent to a recreation ground.

All our halls are available to hire and are popular for children's parties as well as gatherings and meetings for adults. Further information, including current hire charges, may be found on the [Parish Council web site](#), and anyone interested in making a booking should e-mail [bookings@tilehurstparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:bookings@tilehurstparishcouncil.gov.uk), or call the office on 0118 941 8833.

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In addition to weekly hires and one-off party bookings, our halls also host a range of regular community support groups, including:

- Carer support and dementia awareness sessions run by AgeUK;
- Some blood donor sessions;
- Scouts;
- Sea Scouts from November to April;
- Motor Neurone Disease Association gatherings and meetings
- Junior and Senior youth clubs;
- There is a weekly foodbank on Monday afternoons in the Jubilee Annexe at Calcot.

Two of our halls – Main Hall at Calcot and the Cornwell Centre – were also used as polling stations for the general election in May.

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This year, following a Fire Risk Assessment, we had a fire alarm installed in the Jubilee Annexe at Calcot. The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service has always advised that our other halls did not need alarms, but assessments have been scheduled to confirm whether this is still correct.

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Sadly, the woodblock flooring in the Main Hall at Calcot was lifting in various places. It turned out it was not repairable – we believe the floor was fitted in the early 1980s, so it had lasted very well.

The new flooring chosen is wood-effect planks which should be easier and more cost-effective to maintain, and our maintenance officers should be also able to replace planks if necessary.

The new floor was installed in August 2024 and looks very smart.



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Over the year, the maintenance officers have been re-painting areas of each of the halls as necessary to keep them looking clean and smart.

## Recreation grounds



A bench was installed on Calcot recreation ground in memory of Gary Titchener, who was a maintenance officer for Tilehurst Parish Council for some years. The new bench, which was paid for by Gary's widow, replaces an old one near the ball wall, and will be maintained by the Parish Council.

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Antisocial behaviour continues to be a serious issue at all our recreation grounds. In addition to the all-too-usual graffiti, vandalism, littering, etc, there were some more unusual examples, including:

- A large hole was dug near the skate park at Turnhams Farm to create a mound;
- Wooden fencing by the entrance ramp to Westwood Pre-school was vandalised;
- The new cycle racks at Cotswold recreation ground were pulled out of the ground;
- Caps from the top of the fencing around the MUGA at Cotswold were removed;
- A bench was forced loose from its fixings and pushed down a steep bank at Calcot;
- Also at Calcot, the steps leading up the bank had been damaged, leaving rusty nails protruding dangerously;
- The outdoor table tennis table at Cotswold was covered in graffiti.

All antisocial behaviour is costly in terms of the money it takes to put things right, but it has also taken a significant amount of time to rectify things, do extra litter picks, and so on.

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In the autumn, there was an incident where a stolen car was driven into the fencing at Turnhams Farm recreation ground, demolishing around six of the panels. The panels have been replaced but, as fencing is not covered under the insurance policy, the full cost had to be borne by the Parish Council.

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Also in the autumn, a car was accidentally reversed into the wall of the Calcot Centre. Unfortunately, despite the accident being low-speed, there was serious damage to the external brickwork and to the internal wall. The Clerk is liaising with the relevant insurance companies to arrange for repair work to be carried out.

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The car parks at our recreation grounds – including at Calcot – are for the use of people using the buildings and recreational facilities. They are not for residents to use as overflow car parking for their homes.

## **Hilden's Drive play area**

Early in the year, the resident who had unlocked and locked the gates each day moved away which meant that, for a time, the gates were always open. Unfortunately, this led to antisocial behaviour and littering which, in turn, led to complaints being made to the Parish Council. We are now looking for volunteers to open/close the gates each day – as this is a big commitment, a team is needed to share the load; everyone prepared to help should please contact the Clerk ([clerk@tilehurstparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@tilehurstparishcouncil.gov.uk)).

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## St Michael's Churchyard

There is one churchyard in the parish, on New Lane Hall, opposite St Michael's Church (which is in Reading so not in parish). It has no capacity for further burials, so is deemed "closed" and, 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 £15,000 per year for churchyard maintenance, and the Clerk liaises regularly with the Churchwardens, the Rector and the contractor over work which needs carrying out. The iron fencing along the boundary with New Lane Hill will need repairing or replacing fairly soon, so a budgetary reserve is being built up in readiness for this.

## Bus shelters



The Parish Council owns 11 bus shelters at various locations around the parish, including two at the bottom of Langley Hill. In the spring, the shelter nearest the A4 Bath Road was vandalised, and the roof was seriously damaged.



Replacement panels were ordered but, when they arrived, they were not quite the right size, so the shelter was left temporarily without a roof until the correct panels were delivered and fitted.



## Biodiversity and Environment

At its meeting in February 2024, Tilehurst Parish Council adopted a Biodiversity policy to guide it on conserving, enhancing and promoting biodiversity in its decision-making and daily business. Our staff and contractors continue to use environmentally friendly pesticides and herbicides, to cut trees and hedges outside bird nesting season and, whenever possible, they leave dead vegetation as habitat for small mammals and invertebrates. We are also currently considering putting bird boxes and insect hotels in trees where appropriate.

In spring 2025, a survey was carried out to assess the health and safety of trees on Parish Council land. As a result, some work, including removing dead trees, has been carried out. New trees will be planted as appropriate, and we are looking at funding options to help with this.



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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:

- Westwood Farm Community Association held its Easter Farm event in April at Cotswold recreation ground
- Barton Rovers Football Club used Turnhams Farm recreation ground and changing rooms for its Annual Tournament in July
- Westwood Wanderers Football Club held its annual Presentation Day at Cotswold recreation ground in July
- Motor Neurone Disease Association held a fundraising event at Cotswold recreation ground in August
- Tilehurst Litter Pickers used Turnhams Farm Hall as a base for sessions
- Scouts used Turnhams Farm Hall as a meeting point for trips
- Halls have also been used by District Councillors to hold surgeries as well as for public meetings on issues such as possible development of Pincents Hill

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
- Age UK Berkshire's MCST group was given a 20% discount on hall hire at Calcot
- Reading Welfare Rights was awarded £500
- A donation of £500 was given to Berkshire MS Therapy Centre
- Carebus was awarded £500
- Age UK Reading received a £1,000 donation

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We have a councillor who acts as the Parish Council's nominated Trustee for Tilehurst People's Local Charity (also known as Tilehurst Poor's Land Charity), a local grant-making charity covering West Reading, Southcote, Holybrook, Calcot, Theale and Tilehurst. A second of our councillors is an independent Trustee on the same charity.

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In March 2025, West Berkshire Council had another give-away of free compostable food caddy liners in its libraries. As we had offered to be a distribution point for the last giveaway in September 2023, we were contacted and invited to have a stock of the liners again.

We do still have a few rolls of liners, and any West Berkshire resident who would like one is welcome to pick one up from Parish Office between 9.00am and 3.00pm on weekdays – the offer is open only to West Berkshire residents so proof of address will be requested.

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## **Policing**

The Clerk continues to have regular contact with PCSOs and police officers. Representatives of Thames Valley Police (TVP) 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.

In March 2025, TVP started holding community engagement sessions at Stoneham Grove Care Home. These meetings offer members of the public an opportunity to ask the Neighbourhood team questions about ongoing local issues, and the sign-up for them is via the [Thames Valley Alert](#) free e-mail messaging system.

## **Youth work**

In 2024, Tilehurst Parish Council engaged Berkshire Youth to continue with youth service provision for a further year. The work included running the existing the junior youth club on Thursdays, setting up a new senior youth club on Tuesdays, running sports in the park sessions during school holidays, holding Kicks/football sessions at Cotswold Sports Centre, and carrying out detached youth work (this is when youth workers engage with young people on recreation grounds or in retail areas, etc).

The Parish Council also completed two successful applications for external funding. The first was to the Police and Crime Commissioner and meant that additional detached youth work focussing on Calcot recreation ground could be carried out. The award of £2,464 meant extra sessions were possible from October 2023 to December 2024.

The second application was to the Greenham Trust and the funding of £10,019 has helped start the senior youth club at Calcot, provide Kicks/football sessions, as well as sports in the park and other activities in the school holidays. The money is due to be fully spent by the end of May 2025.

In Spring 2024, we also engaged a youth film production company to involve young people in making a film about Tilehurst. Sadly, due to some problems in filming, it was not possible to complete the project as intended, and the company reimbursed the first payment.

All of our youth services rely heavily on volunteers to whom we give a very big “thank you” – and we’re proud to say that two of our long-term volunteers have now been recruited by Berkshire Youth. Anyone interested in becoming involved in helping run our youth services alongside a professional youth worker should please contact the parish office.

We do also have a few vacancies in our youth clubs and anyone interested in joining should contact the parish office in the first instance.



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## Projects

In 2023, in response to suggestions that outdoor gym equipment be installed at recreation grounds, a Big Rig was put in at Turnhams Farm recreation ground. It quickly proved popular and is well used by a wide range of ages and abilities, so the Parish Council felt the equipment might also be enjoyed at Calcot.

With this in mind, in September 2024, the Parish Council put in a successful bid for funding to install a new free-to-use Big Rig, cardio combo and resistance shoulder press at Calcot recreation ground. The project was part-funded from West Berkshire Council's Community Infrastructure Levy Bid Fund which was matched by the Parish Council.



Installation was carried out from Wednesday 12 to Friday 14 February 2025, and the new equipment has already been a popular addition to the facilities at Calcot.



In January 2025, the Parish Council submitted two applications for Members' Bids to West Berkshire Council. Both were successful and the following projects will be carried out over the next few months:

- Cotswold recreation ground – replacing damaged flooring in the play area and around the embankment slide, swings and spider web; and
- Turnhams Farm recreation ground – installation of new disabled access and benches.

## Future projects

Following a tree survey carried out at the beginning of 2025, quite a bit of work will be needed to maintain or remove existing trees at various sites, including St Michael's Churchyard. Possible sources of new trees and funding to replace those removed are being investigated.

Having carried out preliminary consultation, consideration is being given as to what action to take at Hilden's Drive where some of the play equipment is quite old and worn.

Damage from tree roots and stumps has made the path behind Cotswold Sports Centre, from Downs Way to Warbreck Drive, very uneven, so the Parish Council is looking into options for repairing or resurfacing it to improve safety.

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## PLANNING

Tilehurst Parish Council is a statutory consultee on most planning applications within the parish (and some just outside in a neighbouring parish or in the Reading part of Tilehurst). This means the Planning Authority – West Berkshire Council – sends applications to the parish council for consideration and comments and, between May 2024 and April 2025, we discussed 80 applications. Although most are not contentious, occasionally green spaces are proposed for development and members of the public attend a meeting to raise their issues and concerns, which are then included in the Parish Council's comments.

During the year, the Parish council made direct representations to the Planning Inspector appointed to review the West Berkshire Local Plan. This followed proposals to include parts of the "Pincent's Hill" site for housing development in the plan. The Parish Council objected at both the Inspector examination session and the following public consultation. The site currently remains in the proposed Local Plan but it has yet to be adopted by West Berkshire Council.

### **Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)**

The NDP steering group prepared all the required NDP documentation and submitted it to West Berkshire Council (WBC) in April 2024. Uncertainty around WBC's Local Plan and organisational changes in the planning department led to unexpected and long delays, and no feedback was received until late October. Unfortunately, when the feedback was reviewed, some was found to be inconsistent – even contradictory – with previous suggestions and advice. Feedback also seemed to question the validity of findings from a 2019 survey of local residents.

The NDP steering group also felt that changes to the political direction both nationally and at district level would be likely to impact on the Local Plan with which the NDP must align. This would mean a great deal of further work would be required to review and understand WBC's comments, and it was likely that large parts of the NDP would need to be rewritten.

Overall, after almost ten years working on the NDP, many of the volunteers on the steering group felt frustrated and disillusioned by the apparent lack of progress. At a meeting, it was decided to pause the work indefinitely, and to pass the NDP back to the Parish Council to assess if and when to resume the work. Members of the original steering group would decide then whether they wished to be involved.

The situation was discussed at the February Parish Council meeting, and it was agreed that work on the NDP should be paused for up to six months until the outcome of the Local Plan Review and changes to the planning process were known. The situation will be reviewed shortly.

Whatever happens going forward, Tilehurst Parish Council would like to thank everyone who has been involved in putting together the draft NDP over the past decade, especially the steering group's chairman, Kevin Page, who led the group throughout the ten years.

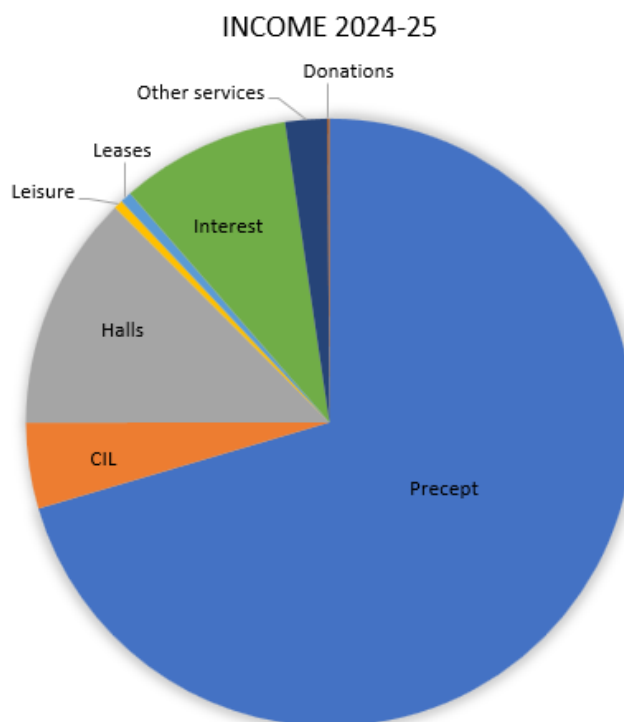
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## COUNCIL FINANCES

### Tilehurst Parish Council income and expenditure 2024/25

Income	£	%
Precept	315,908	70.42
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and grants	20,478	4.56
Hall lettings	56,189	12.53
Leisure and recreation (football pitch hire)	2,152	0.48
Leases and miscellaneous income	2,714	0.61
Interest and investment income	40,658	9.06
Other services income	10,019	2.23
Other donations	501	0.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>448,619</b>	<b>100.00</b>



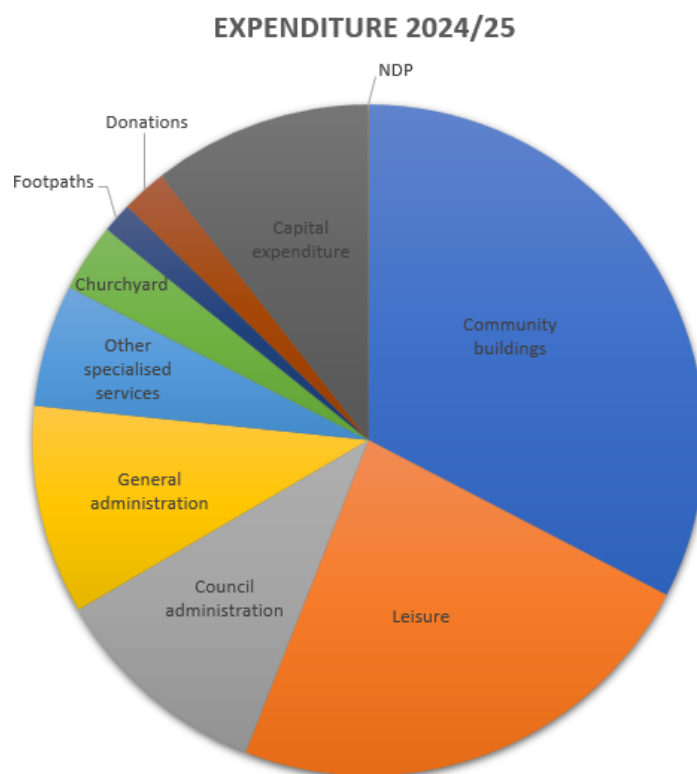
**Precept** – This is the part of the Council Tax bill which funds services provided by the Parish Council. For the 2024/25 financial year, the precept (annual charge) was £56.74 per Band D household. For 2025/26, this will increase by 6.57% to £60.47.

**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.

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Expenditure	£	%
Maintenance of community buildings	140,281	32.64
Leisure and recreation	100,288	23.32
Council administration (including meetings)	45,579	10.60
Facilities and general administration (excluding staff costs)	43,290	10.07
Other specialised services (OSS) (ie contract with Berkshire Youth)	25,296	5.98
Upkeep of St Michael's Churchyard	14,131	3.29
Footpaths and street lighting	6,247	1.45
Donations to local organisations and discounted hall use	9,399	2.19
Capital expenditure (ie play equipment)	45,124	10.50
Production of Neighbourhood Development Plan	228	0.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>429,803</b>	<b>100.00</b>



**Staff** – All the above expenditure is inclusive of 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, the charge amounted to £27,569.

**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.

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## TILEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Tilehurst Parish Council is made up of three separate wards and can have up to 18 councillors in total. Current councillors as at May 2025 are:

Ward	Councillor
Tilehurst North (maximum eight councillors)	Mrs Rose Reynolds Mrs Rosie Braine Mr Femi Royal 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 Mr Malcolm Powers Mrs Caroline Basden Mr Tony Linden Mr Joe Lally
Tilehurst Calcot (maximum one councillor)	Mrs Sandra Vickers

This means there are currently four 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](mailto:clerk@tilehurstparishcouncil.gov.uk) or calling 0118 941 8833.

### Parish Council responsibilities

There are strict laws governing what a parish council may or may not do. Below is a guide as to the responsibilities of Tilehurst Parish Council and West Berkshire District Council (this is not a comprehensive list).

Tilehurst Parish Council	West Berkshire Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parish recreation grounds and play areas, including benches, litter and dog waste bins</li><li>• Parish halls</li><li>• Parish notice boards</li><li>• Salt bins</li><li>• Some bus shelters, streetlights and benches near the highway</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highways authority – potholes, cleaning, streetlights, pavements, signage, etc</li><li>• Public rights of way (footpaths and bridleways)</li><li>• Recycling and waste collections</li><li>• Planning authority</li></ul>

Some matters, such as the salt bins, have already been devolved from district to parish level, and further devolution is expected in the near future.

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## 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 is:

SCHEDULE OF FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS		
	2025	2026
January	14	13
February	11	10
March	11	10
April	8	14
May	13	12
June	10	
July	8	
August	12	
September	9	
October	14	
November	11	
December	9	

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](http://www.tilehurstparishcouncil.gov.uk)

## Parish Office

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

The office is open to visitors from Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 3.00pm (excluding bank holidays) – no appointment is needed. Anyone wishing to visit outside these times should contact the office to arrange a suitable time.

