



Burwell Parish Council invites the residents of  
Burwell to the

# **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

on

**TUESDAY 6th MAY 2025 at 7.00 PM**  
**Mandeville Hall, Burwell, CB25 0AR**

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# Welcome and Chair's Report

I would like to welcome you to our Annual Parish Meeting which is the occasion when we report on the activities of your Parish Council during the previous year.

We have seen changes with Staff and Councillors during the past year. Yvonne Rix, our Clerk decided to take early retirement, but we were happy and relieved that she agreed to stay on part-time in her role as the Responsible Finance Officer. We were pleased to welcome Katherine Hyett as our new Clerk, and she is proving to be an excellent appointment and the changeover has fortunately been seamless. We were sorry to receive the resignations of both Helen McMenemy Smith and Jenny Moss as Councillors and thank them for their years of service. However, they are still very much involved in community projects. We are pleased to welcome Ken McCarthy and Julia Rogers as our new Councillors.

Burwell Parish Council continues to meet twice each month, and our four Working Groups meet every other month and make recommendations which can be actioned once approved by Full Council. Our meetings have recently returned to Mandeville Hall to enable an extra regular booking from Judo on Tuesday evenings at The Gardiner Memorial Hall.

These Working Groups are Finance and General Purposes, Asset and Environment, Community Leisure Health and Sport and Safety. We do understand that there can be some overlap of responsibilities between the Groups. The Climate Change, Biodiversity and Pollution Forum comprises Parish Councillors and a representative from Spring Close Management Group, Pauline's Swamp Nature Reserve Trust, Wild Burwell and Burwell Environmental Group. The Chair of each Group will give a detailed report for your information.

We are planning to widen the remit of our Climate Change Policy to include Biodiversity and Pollution plans. We are still working closely with Cambridge Carbon Footprint and have held three successful Repair cafes and two Swish afternoons which are very popular clothes exchange events during the year.

We were pleased to receive a grant for Mandeville Hall which will enable us to install solar panels on the roof upgrade our insulation and have battery storage facilities which moves us towards our Policy of Net Zero for our buildings by 2030.

We are still working with Lizzi Houghton who is the Youth Coordinator for Cambridgeshire County Council and Caline Easy from East Cambs. District Council exploring ways to restart Youth Provision in Burwell. There have been some Senior Football sessions at Burwell Sports' Centre on Sunday evenings and we hope that the newly refurbished Connections Youth Bus will be visiting the Recreation Ground once a week before too long.

We held our annual Strategy Day in July to consider our short, medium and long term objectives.

After months working towards the possible implementation of 20 mph in Burwell and extensive public consultation, residents rejected both the partial and full scheme suggestions. However, we are hoping to receive a grant through the Local Highways Improvement initiative towards the installation of flashing signs on Buntings Path and The Causeway near to the school entrances. We know that there are serious safety concerns when driving out of the exit at the Gardiner Memorial Hall and we are investigating possible solutions to ameliorate this situation.

House building is due to start soon at the Newmarket Road development site but plans for the proposed Sports' Hub are not progressing as quickly as we hoped. There has been another change of CEO at This Land and we are still unsure how much remedial work will be carried out on the site prior to handover. We are working to resolve these issues and Charlotte Cane our new MP has agreed to help with negotiations.

I would like to acknowledge the work carried out by Katherine, our Clerk, Yvonne, our Responsible Finance Officer, Sarah, our assistant to the Clerk, as well as George, Debbie and Martyn. I would like to express thanks to them and to my fellow Councillors for their help and support to me as Chair of Burwell Parish Council.

We will continue to be a proactive Council working hard to benefit the residents of Burwell.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that Parish Councillors are volunteers and that they receive no remuneration for the work that they carry out for the Community.

**Liz Swift**

**Chair Burwell Parish Council**

## Assets & Environment Working Group 2024/2025

The Assets and Environment Working Group takes care of the maintenance, safety and improvement of Council buildings including the Gardiner Memorial Hall, Mandeville Hall, the Jubilee Reading Room and the pavilion at the Rec.

The Working Group is also responsible for the village play areas, the cemetery on Ness Road, the allotments, and the Council's open spaces, including the Rec and Margaret Field, and all the trees on Council land. For Spring Close and Pauline's Swamp, the Working Group shares responsibility with the Spring Close Management Group and the Pauline's Swamp trustees.

**Climate Change:** It has been a busy year for the decarbonisation of the Council's buildings. The Gardiner Memorial Hall already has air source heat pumps, solar panels and improved insulation, but Mandeville Hall is still in need of attention. Fortunately, this year, the Parish Council secured a Net Zero Villages grant of £25,000 to fund the addition of solar panels and storage batteries, and to upgrade the insulation. To ensure the money is well spent, we are commissioning energy audits for the Council's three main buildings to guide the way we adapt them for the challenges of climate change.

**Grass cutting and weed management:** The consequences of climate change and habitat loss have raised awareness of the need to preserve biodiversity, encourage wildflowers and support pollinators. With this in mind, the Parish Council introduced a new grass cutting regime for 2024/2025, reducing the maximum number of cuts from 10 to 6 each year (but with sight lines at road junctions cut more frequently, as necessary). We also enlarged the areas left uncut around the perimeter of the largest mown areas.

2024 was a difficult year for weed management. In March, prompted by the concerns of councillors and residents about the health and biodiversity impact of glyphosate, the Parish Council agreed to take over weed control in Burwell from Cambridge County Council. We had been assured that the County Council would liaise closely with parishes that opted out and would provide a contribution to costs. Unfortunately, despite repeated reminders, the County Council provided neither money nor support, and in September the Council had little choice but to hand back responsibility. The lesson learned was that additional funding and careful preparation will be required if the Parish Council is to take on weed management for Burwell's 25 miles of kerbs and associated pavements (comprising 13.5 miles of roads, mostly with kerbs on both sides).

**Vandalism:** Over the last year, the Council has had to repair damage caused by vandalism at the cemetery, the Rec play area, the tennis courts, the pavilion, Pauline's Swamp and the public toilets on The Causeway. This expense comes on top of routine maintenance and creates a new overhead due to the need to install security cameras at more and more sites. The police are always informed and video footage shared with them, but it remains a difficult problem to solve.

**Trees** The Parish Council is responsible for a large number of trees, including many mature trees at the Rec, Spring Close, Jubilee Green and Margaret Field. Every three or four years, consultants are appointed to survey all the trees and report on their health, their pruning requirements and any safety issues; the next survey will take place this spring. Taking care of so many trees is expensive but essential, given the unique contribution they make to the environment and human well-being.

## Finance & General Purposes Working Group 2024/2025

Firstly, we would like to thank Yvonne Rix, our Responsible Finance Officer, for the guidance and assistance she has given us over the past twelve months. During the year, the Group addressed many issues and made recommendations to Council on several important items including a New Financial Regulation Model. A review of Standing Orders and Code of Conduct Policies was carried out and our Local Council Risk Assessments were updated.

One of the major aspects that the group worked on was the Local Precept. This is worked out based on an average Band D property, and much work is carried out by the group to ensure it recommends a robust but achievable budget to Council. The precept has to consider not only the income from Parish Council facilities such as its halls and recreation grounds but also the expenses incurred in maintaining such amenities and other assets and expenses such as trees, grass cutting, cemetery maintenance, utility bills for all its buildings and staff wages. This year we have also had increased National insurance, additional staff hours and increased electricity costs. Burwell Parish Council has one of the lower precepts in East Cambridgeshire although it is one of the largest villages.

Unlike District and County Councils who also receive extra money through the rate support grant from Central Government, all the money that the parish needs is raised from the precept and from letting income from village halls and from the Community Infrastructure Levy from new houses that have been built in addition to any funds from grants that have been applied for. Council accepted the group's budget recommendation based on work carried out and previous budget performances and accepted a proposed 12% increase in Precept. This means that in the Year 25-26 the Parish Council proportion of Council Tax for a Band D property is £104.32 which is equivalent to £2.01 per week.

The precept covers staff and office costs, maintenance of recreation, sports and play areas, cemetery, allotments, grass cutting, tree works, street furniture and Parish Council owned buildings. It also pays for some capital expenditure throughout the village. Where possible we try and source external funding to cover costs such as the present refurbishment and modernisation plans for Mandeville Hall for which we have received a grant of approximately £25,000. Most major capital projects and upgrades are reliant on grants and CIL funding.

One of the roles for the group is also to plan so that, as far as possible, there are sufficient funds to carry out the projects that the Council identifies are needed. This may mean that some projects have to wait for future years and our Five-Year Plan is reviewed each year. Council has published a Climate Change Policy which states its intention to have all its buildings carbon neutral by 2030.

As expected, energy costs increased significantly over the year. Members of our Energy Strategy Group monitored the use of energy at all our sites over recent months and as a result of this, it has been agreed to challenge the Engie Group for possible mis-sale of energy products in 2022.

**Mike Swift, Vice Chair, Finance and General Purposes Working Group**

## Community, Leisure, Health and Sport Working Group 2024-2025

The Group met five times during the year with numerous further meetings taking place with other village organisations and outside agencies. Six recommendations were made to full Council, all being approved. Financial donations were also made to The Twinning Association, The Day Centre, The Sports Centre and The Local Library.

The Council organised three Repair Cafes and two Swish (clothes swap) sessions during the year. As well as being popular with our local Community they help with our Climate Change Policy by reducing our Carbon Footprint in the village and beyond.

Councillor Michael Geary carried out a long overdue Sedge cut at Pauline's Swamp. With the help of the newly formed Friends of Pauline's Swamp group raking and a clean-up of the affected area is now taking place.

Little progress has been made with the development of the Newmarket Road Sports' Hub. Despite several meetings with the respective parties, we are not moving forward. Our new M.P. Charlotte Cane is attempting to arrange a meeting soon to resolve some of the outstanding issues.

The contracts for the new local bus routes have been agreed. The T4 route which is Newmarket to Addenbrookes (including the 6<sup>th</sup> Form Colleges) will be operated by Stagecoach and the T5 route, Soham to Cambridge Drummer Street will be run by the A2B Group. Timetables have yet to be finalised, but hopefully, these changes will come into effect by early June.

A successful Youth Fusion Day organised by E.C.D.C. was held in the village in August with many activities enjoyed by the youngsters. The Connections Youth Bus is currently undergoing refurbishment and once this is completed, weekly sessions will be held at the Recreation Ground.

Following feedback from members of the Community, Councillor Ken McCarthy is keen to progress 'Burwell in Bloom' to enhance the appearance of the village. He has spoken to many organisations and the proposal has been warmly received. Ken is happy to lead this activity, and the Parish Council will support him.

Finally, another Community led proposal has recently been brought to the attention of the Council. Wild Burwell whose members are already active in the management and maintenance of Spring Close together with support from 'Greater Cambridge Chalk Streams' and Geologist Dr. Steven Boreham propose a 'Burwell Chalk Stream Project' aimed at improving the unique Spring and Chalk Stream that runs through the site eventually feeding into Burwell Lode. Further discussions are required but, hopefully, we will be able to assist in this exciting initiative.

**Mike Swift, Chair, Community, Leisure, Health and Sport Working Group**

## Safety Working Group Report 2024/2025

After months of working towards possible implementation of a 20mph scheme in Burwell and many Public Consultation sessions both full and partial 20mph schemes were rejected by residents.

The Parish Council has now submitted an application to the Local Highways Improvement Initiative Scheme for solar powered flashing signs on Buntings Path and The Causeway School entrances. Prioritisation and feasibility studies have been undertaken between February and May, this is a lengthy process, and we will learn if our application has been successful in October 2025. If agreed, construction will take place between July and December 2026.

M.V.A.S. – Our Moveable Vehicle Activated signs were returned to the manufacturer for repair and updating. They are now back in the village being deployed at various points to record vehicle speed. The data will be analysed, updated and displayed on the Council website.

Suffolk County Council is leading on the proposed Burwell to Exning Cycleway. The last update that we received stated that there are ongoing landowner negotiations and once outstanding issues are resolved and there is land agreement, it will be ready to go to operations and pricing. We consider this to be an important project as we are very aware of the danger the bridge poses to both cyclists and pedestrians.

Speedwatch equipment has been checked, and it is hoped to restart regular sessions throughout the village. However, we need to recruit more volunteers.

We regularly contact Highways to try to find solutions and to encourage them to prioritise issues such as inappropriate parking on The Causeway, dangerous junctions, repainting of road markings, potholes, uneven pavements and dangerous trees.

We have published information about how to avoid scams on our website.

Concerns about safety and noise at Battery Storage sites have been raised by residents and we are supporting the safety of Lithium-Ion Batteries Campaign.

A meeting has been arranged for the Police and Crime Commissioner to talk to Councillors and answer questions about his role and responsibilities for policing in the local community.

There will also be an online presentation which Councillors have been invited to attend concerning issues around hate crime.

### **The Safety Working Group**

## Climate Change, Biodiversity and Pollution Forum (CBP) 2024- 2025

There has been a recent change to the terms of reference of the Climate Change Form with the renaming of the Sub-Group as the Climate Change, Biodiversity and Pollution Forum. It had become evident that the topics of discussion were regularly expanding from the original “Climate Change” remit to include many of the Biodiversity and potential pollution issues affecting our local community, and a recommendation was made to Full Council to change the name to reflect this. This was subsequently agreed by Full Council on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2025.

The structure of the group remains unchanged, with local groups Wild Burwell, Paulines Swamp, Spring Close and The Burwell Environment Group supporting the Parish Council. We would like to thank them for the support this year particularly with the ongoing development of the village “Biodiversity Plan”. This will become a significant part of the Climate Action Plan that itself was revised in April 2024.

The CBP Forum has been particularly successful in supporting the Parish Council with its aim to reduce the carbon emissions within our community. In assisting the Parish Council and local organisations with application for the “Net Zero Villages initiative by East Cambridgeshire District Council, and the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority grant opportunities, we have as a community enjoyed significant success in this area. The Parish Council secured funding for solar power for Mandeville Hall, with both the Burwell Museum and Sports Centre also being successful with the awarding of individual grants. These systems will reduce or eliminate their dependence on grid supplies, thus providing a marked reduction on energy costs and emissions.

The Burwell Repair Cafe and Swish Clothes Swap initiatives continue to be a huge success. In many cases they have been oversubscribed and make a large contribution to the reduction in our carbon footprint and contribution by way of fund donations to local community organisations.

We are considering several initiatives with respect to the restoration and improvement of our local waterways. Wild Burwell is already working with the Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project to restore and protect the stream in Spring Close, and we hope to explore what opportunities may exist to restore the Lode to protect both its natural beauty and develop it as a recreational asset for the community.

As a council and community we are all aware of the many renewable energy developments close to our village already in existence or in the planning stage. Whilst we strongly support the development of this infrastructure, Burwell Parish Council and the CBP Forum are mindful of its impact on our community. We continue to monitor and discuss this locally and will ensure that appropriate representation is made to ensure that any future developments are approved only when it has been demonstrated that due consideration is given to our local environment, and that any potential community benefit is secured.

**Clive Leach, Chair, CBP Forum**

## East Cambridgeshire District Council Annual Report 2024/25

The District Council moved into no overall control during 2024/25 when a Councillor resigned from the Conservative group to form a new Liberal Democrat and Independent Group. Following the announcement from the Labour Government that all councils in England will move to a Unitary Authority much time is being spent on how that might work in practice. In the meantime, the Conservative group continues to deliver the Corporate Plan which is based on the promises made at election time.

These promises included:

- Keeping costs low for residents – only increase Council Tax as a last resort.
- Retain free parking in our city and town centre car parks.
- Invest millions in local infrastructure, such as GP Surgeries, youth and community buildings and village hall upgrades.
- Consider the final business case for an eco-bereavement centre, near Mepal.
- Continue to implement our Environment Plan with a focus on nature recovery and reaching net zero by 2035/36.
- Bring in changes to the waste and recycling service, including black wheelie bins and a separate weekly food waste service.
- Secure improved cycling and walking infrastructure in our district.

### Budget

- The Council froze its share of Council Tax bills for the 11th year.
- The Council has £0 external borrowing, £0 debt servicing costs.
- Balanced budget for next 2 years.
- Free car parking retained.
- Additional money for waste and recycling.
- Money for black wheelie bins.
- Additional money for Internal Drainage Boards.
- Financing for new homes, including through Community Land Trusts

### Local Planning

- Full planning permission granted for the first phases of housing development at Newmarket Road, Burwell. I find it disappointing that building has yet to start.

### Committee Membership etc

During 2024/25 I have been: Chair of the Audit Committee; vice-Chair of the Planning Committee; ECDC representative on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority; and a member of the Swaffhams Internal Drainage Board.

**David Brown, District Councillor for Burwell**

## Attendees

**Councillors:** Liz Swift, Mike Swift, Clive Leach, Jim Perry, Gus Jones, Ken McCarthy, Ian Woodroffe, Richard Jenkins, Julia Rogers, Lea Dodds

**District Councillors:** David Brown

**County Councillor:** Yannifer Malinowski

**Public:** 8 members of the public

## Questions

- 1) A member of the public asked why the flashing solar signs were submitted to highways for LHI (Local highway Improvement) funding when these had been approved on Buntings Path a number of years ago?**

Prior to being accepted for the 20mph scheme Burwell Parish Council had decided to apply for the Privately Funding Highway Improvements (PFHI) initiative for these signs on Buntings Path and had been successful. It was decided by Council to put this initiative on hold whilst we considered 20mph across the whole village. We had been informed that it would cost us £5000 to remove these lights should the speed limit of the whole road change to 20mph.

The village was consulted about 20mph throughout 2024 and it was decided not to take this forward. As there was strong feedback towards slowing traffic down and ensuring safety near to the school we decided to move forward with an LHI. This application is different as we are applying for funding as well as permission from Highways for both Buntings Path and the Causeway.

- 2) A resident highlighted their concern about the screening of solar panels and battery stations as it is destroying views in the village**

Clive Leach responded and stated he didn't feel the visual and acoustic screening is as it should be. He stated that it is something that Council had been discussing and are very aware of this issue. We will continue to raise this when consulting on planning applications. Cllr David Brown said that the District Council have now employed a new Ecologist who is now working very closely on screening of solar farms.

- 3) A resident asked if the fire service can cope with the increased risk of battery fires from these new renewable energy developments?**

The Parish Council cannot answer on behalf of the fire service but Liz Swift stated that the fire service are a consultee on the planning applications. Lea Dodds said that Charlotte Cane MP has a petition running: <https://www.eclid.org.uk/campaigns/safety-of-battery-storage-sites> and is keen for the fire service to be properly funded.

Clive Leach gave some feedback from a site meeting that Burwell Parish Council held with Grenergy who are planning battery storage on Hightown Drove that they plan to build a bund wall which should contain any extinguishment used to suppress the fire and reduce the risk of pollution.

- 4) A resident asked if a group had been set up to enhance the communications about Burwell South? They stated they would like more communication about these issues.**

Councillors responded that we are getting very variable amounts of information from different developments, but we are trying to communicate all the time and ensure we find out as much as possible. Sometimes it is challenging as these projects are at the National Infrastructure level but we will continue to try and receive feedback from residents, input views on consultations and provide feedback to residents. The Clerk explained that discussions about solar farms wasn't allocated to one working group in Council as it is such an important issue and impacts our climate change forum, our community and potential parish council finances. She also stated that we are encouraging applicants to hold public meetings. The resident explained that she would like more visibility and knowledge of what has been proposed.

**5) A resident asked if the Hightown Drove development was the fenced off field on the left?**

Julia Rogers responded that the field they were referring to was National Trust. The planned development is in the adjacent field.

**6) A councillor asked do we just accept these applications?**

Clive Leach responded and said that we recognise that it is hard to stop nationally significant projects, however we should keep asking questions and ensuring we mitigate potential problems as well as do our best to gain community benefits to Burwell. He feels renewables is one of the most important issues for the Parish.

**7) A resident asked about the planned changes to the wheelie bin service – when, why and how often?**

This is led by District Council. District Councillor David Brown said this is a national initiative to standardise waste services – his best guess was that it may happen in 12 months' time.

The last press release the Parish Council received can be found here:

<https://eastcambs.gov.uk/press-releases/2024/council-plans-enhance-waste-service>

More information can be found here:

<https://eastcambs.gov.uk/node/1032>

**8) A resident asked whether the Parish Council monitors activities in Priory wood? She is really concerned about what's happening, lots of trees being felled, dens being built and wondered where our boundary was?**

It was explained that we own Priory Meadow and the Woodland Trust own Priory Woods. We are happy to contact the Woodland Trust if people raise their concerns with us.

Jim Perry stated that he had taken a number of photos of issues in Priory Woods but not heard much back from the Woodland Trust.

**A follow up question was asked about whether an upgraded path through the woods was part of the planning permission given to Woodside Meadows on Weirs Drove?**

Cllr. David Brown said he would check with planning. A resident of Woodside Meadows said they had asked the developers about this and it was not a condition of their planning application.

**Meeting closed 20:08**