

Gamlingay Parish Council

Annual Report May 2023 – April 2024



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GAMLINGAY PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMANS REPORT 2023/2024

(Given at Annual Parish Meeting 23.4.2024)

Samantha Martin

Chair's report on 2023-2024

Gamlingay Parish Council meets monthly, with various sub-committees meeting in between, such as Finance & General Purposes and Planning. We have regular attendance from Bridget and Sebastian at full council meetings and we're grateful for their continued support in navigating and dealing with District and County matters impacting Gamlingay. We also meet with neighbouring councils in Potton and Everton on a quarterly basis to discuss shared issues and opportunities affecting our areas.

Our key responsibilities as a Parish Council include things like grass cutting, maintenance of cemeteries, play & recreation areas and community buildings. Last year felt like a particularly busy year for maintenance, with:

- a major refurbishment of the skatepark at the Eco, which involved replacing a number of the panels.
- the village sign being taken away to have a spring clean.
- experts consulted to assess badger activity near the Bowls club.
- a new Coronation bench purchased to celebrate King Charles' coronation, which will be installed soon at the Pitt; and
- works to improve the energy efficiency of the Old Methodist Chapel, one of the community buildings that we're responsible for. We'll shortly be installing new LED lighting there as well as upgrading some of the electrics and investigating roof tile and insulation replacements. We're also delighted to welcome the Children's Montessori as a regular user of the building this year.

We make a proportion of our annual budget available for grants to local community groups. In 2023-24 this came to £12,762 and included continued support for the Youth Café and Youth Club run by Forward Gamlingay, which attracts large numbers of young people from the village and surrounding areas. We also made awards to local groups such as the WI, Connect Café, Carpet Bowls, Jelly Tots, Gamlingay Village Primary – for the kitchen garden and the choir, Gamlingay Schools Out Club and the Football Club, and other organisations such as the British Legion and the Wildlife Trust.

Our Neighbourhood Plan continues to have a positive impact in shaping future development within the village. We recently shared an article in the Gazette reflecting on the plan a year on, and how it has been referenced in a number of decisions on applications by South Cambridgeshire District Council, the Statutory Planning Authority, as well as by the Planning Inspectorate when an application has gone to appeal.

I know the Council as well as residents were particularly pleased when the application for 'The Lupin Field', along with a couple of others in the past year for self-builds, was refused as it was contrary to policy GAM3 which aims to protect the open countryside and landscape setting of the village. Although it is likely this decision may be challenged in the future, but we will be ready to fight it again.

We're also starting to receive contributions thanks to policy GAM8 which requires developers to support enhanced footway/cycleway networks. Only £960 so far but the pot continues to build. And we've already applied to the County Council's Local Highways Initiative for a new footpath to connect Park Lane to Dennis Green (The Clopton Way) – we'll keep you posted if our application is successful.

Christmas lights last year were a success with good support from the village. Particular thanks to The Christmas Decorators for installing them, Peter Middlicott at All Growth for donating the trees and to Jill Compton and her group of volunteers for organising the event. I know it's a little early to start thinking about Christmas this year, but we've been planning ahead and have ordered 21 new Christmas lights and 10 new lamppost sockets. The lights are shaped differently and will look like braids which wind round the top part of the posts. The display will also now extend out from the main crossroads, part way down Mill Street, Green End and Waresley Road.

The Parish Council continues to be supportive of action against climate change and supporting biodiversity and green initiatives in the village. The Pocket Forest is growing well, thanks to Emma Leaf Grimshaw looking after it, and our wildflower verges are also now established. Thanks also to other volunteers, including Duke of Edinburgh participants, who carry out regular litter picking in the village and sweeping the tennis courts.

The Climate Action Group hosted the village's Repair Café and a big thanks to Gwyn Williams for setting up the Big Rake Off. We've also supported courses in scything and traditional hedge laying this year – which have been attended by volunteers as well as our groundsman and a sample area of hedge laid in the meadows.

We carried out our usual routine tree works, as well as a tree survey in St Mary's Field Cemetery and have had maps produced to indicate where we can plant new trees, with a recent donation just added to the new cemetery.

Grass cutting is always a controversial topic but one that we take very seriously as a Parish Council. The grass cutting contract is particularly complex and a lot of time and thought goes into the different cuts for different parts of land, especially the meadows, to ensure a balance between ensuring leisure access and enhancing biodiversity. There is also a new rewinding scheme for grass cutting being trialled at St Mary's churchyard from April, which has been set up by the church.

A fair bit of time this year has been spent by councillors, alongside other volunteers, planning for the 10-year anniversary of Millbridge Brook Meadows this May 2024. I'd like to acknowledge the work of Councillor John Evans in leading this, supported by councillors Wendy and Joe, and particular thanks to Gwyn Williams and Emma Leaf

Grimshaw too. The festivities begin on Sunday 5 May with a picnic on the meadows, along with two birds of prey flying displays during the afternoon and an exhibition in the Eco Hub. Attendees will also notice fresh new signage in the meadows providing more information about trees, plants and animals. Other events taking place that month include:

- pupils from Gamlingay Village Primary burying a time capsule to show future generations what life was like in the 2020s
- a wildlife walk for adults and a nature trail for GVP pupils
- half term outdoor adventure for families
- visits to the community turbine

To find out more, do take a look at the new section on the meadows on the Parish Council's website and check out our facebook event pages.

Ahead of the celebrations, we'll shortly be carrying out repair works to the paths (now that everything is finally drying out!) and also to remove the rotten wooden uprights that sit around the brick maze. We welcome any ideas from residents on what we could put there instead as we know it's a favourite place for children playing on the meadows.

We agreed our budget for 2024-25 at our December meeting, within which the precept requirement is £230,403. Per Band D household this represents a small increase of 3.89% on the Parish Council element of your Council Tax (£146.26 per annum per household).

Our most recent audited accounts for 22-23 are also available to view this evening.

Our Council is made up of 15 Parish Councillors and supported by two Clerks; you can find all our details on the website. During the course of the last year, we said goodbye to four councillors and welcomed another four. We still have five vacancies and would encourage you to consider whether you'd be interested in joining us. It's not a big time commitment and it's a positive way of giving back to the community. We're keen to ensure the council fully represents everyone living in the Parish. Please do come along to a meeting to hear what it's all about!

I'd like to end by saying thank you to all of the team supporting the Council – to our grounds person Keith, Library Manager Kate, Cleaner Karen, our brilliant and extremely knowledgeable Clerks Kirstin & Leanne, without whom we wouldn't be able to do our roles, and lastly, to the team of councillors who donate their time, knowledge and good humour in supporting the council to carry out its work, thank you.

Welcome to the Annual Report on the activities of the parish council.

General information

Except for August, the parish council meets on the second Tuesday throughout the year. The Finance and General Purposes committee meets on the fourth Tuesday each month. Both this meeting and the council meeting are preceded by a meeting of the Planning committee.

All meetings normally take place at the Eco Hub, Stocks Lane, Gamlingay. Agendas are posted on notice boards outside the Eco Hub, Stocks Lane, on Mill St and on our website www.gamlingay-pc.gov.uk

The Parish Council holds the Quality Award from the National Association of Local Councils in recognition that it had achieved good practice in governance, community engagement and council improvement. The award is valid until August 2024.

Responsibilities

- Recreation ground, Butts playground, Skatepark, BMX track, Millbridge brook Meadows and lower field, Merton Field (off Greenacres – known locally as the log, leased from Merton College), open space at Chapelfields and Northfield Close, the Pitt on Waresley Rd and Cinques Common (managed by the wildlife Trust on the PC's behalf)
- The Old Methodist Chapel at Green End
- Cemeteries (Stocks Lane and St Mary's field)
- Maintenance of closed churchyards (St Mary's and the Baptist Chapel)
- Gamlingay Eco Hub (leased to Gamlingay Community Centre Ltd)
- Grass cutting of the above areas and verges within the village
- 51 street lights

Staff

5 - all part time - 2 clerks (job share), grounds man, cleaner for the Old Methodist Chapel and library manager.

Plans for 2024-25

See the action plan on our website <https://gamlingay-pc.gov.uk/document-category/action-plans/>

Allotments

<https://gamlingayallotments.co.uk/>

The parish council provides 88 allotments for the parish.

The allotments are situated on the North side of Long Lane, adjacent to the track that leads up to the permissive path to Gamlingay Woods and 8 at Green End.

Gamlingay Allotment Gardeners Association (GAGA) is responsible for the running of the allotments. They can be contacted on gamlingay.allotments@gmail.com

Contact Details

To contact your Parish Council, write to the Clerks at The Eco Hub, Stocks Lane, Gamlingay, SG19 3JR. Telephone us on 01767 650310 or email us at clerk@gamlingay-pc.gov.uk

To contact individual councillors, please use the following email addresses;

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5 vacancies

Audited accounts are available on our website - <https://gamlingay-pc.gov.uk/financial-information>

The precept for 2023-24 was £ 220 650