

Gamlingay Parish Council

Annual Report May 2024 – April 2025



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GAMLINGAY PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMANS REPORT 2024/2025
(Given at Annual Parish Meeting 22.4.2025)

Samantha Martin

Chair's report on 2024-2025

Good evening and welcome to Gamlingay's Annual Parish Meeting. I'm Wendy Boyne, Vice Chair of Gamlingay Parish Council and I'm chairing tonight's meeting on behalf of our chair, Samantha Martin, who has sent her apologies due to the surprise early arrival of her second child two weeks ago.

Tonight's meeting is a chance to hear from the Parish Council, as well as other groups and organisations on what we've been doing over the past year. It's also a chance for you all to ask any questions you may have.

After I've delivered the Chair's report, we'll then hear from Bridget Smith our District Councillor, followed by updates and presentations from the following:

- 1 John McKee, Chair of Trustees at Gamlingay Community Centre Ltd on the Eco Hub, how it's managed and its green credentials
- 2 Emma Leaf-Grimshaw and Gwyn Williams on the Millbridge brook restoration project, biodiversity audit and traditional hedge-laying in the village

There will be a brief Q and A to follow at the end too.

So, on to the Chair's report for 2024-5.

For those that may not be aware, Full 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 have also extended our thanks to Sebastian, who has served us for over 20 year and who will not be re-standing for election this year.

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:

- New path edging in St Marys Churchyard
- New tree planting in St Marys Field cemetery
- Annual tree works

- Supporting voluntary groups, particularly those that work to maintain the meadows, orchard trees, raking and hedge laying
- Emma's Tiny Forest notice board
- New Parish Council website
- Memorials made safe in Baptist Chapel and Stocks Lane
- Along with usual maintenance for the Old Methodist Chapel, we've purchased a new Air Source Heat Pump as well as begun preparing plans for the improvement of the building's energy efficiency, including the replacement of windows and roofing later this year

We make a proportion of our annual budget available for grants to local community groups. In 2024-25 this came to £11,500. Unfortunately, we lost Youth club this year. But we did make awards to local groups such as the WI, Connect Café, East Anglia Air Ambulance, Mini Monties, Gamlingay Schools Out Club, GVP Kitchen Garden, Repair Café, St Neots Museum and Cambridgeshire Search and Rescue 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. Each year we share an article in the Gazette reflecting on the impact the plan is having in the village, including the refusal of the application for 'The Lupin Field' as well as ensuring policy GAM8 applies to applications which require developers to provide contributions towards enhanced footway/cycleway networks. This pot will gradually be built up and then put towards Local Highways Initiative applications for new footpaths.

In the last year we invested in 21 new LED rope Christmas lights on lampposts starting from the crossroads and reaching out into the village. This is 10 more than in previous years. We managed to sell our 14 old Christmas motifs to another parish council (they were second hand in 2014 when we bought them) and this money helped pay for the new lights. It is not only a matter of buying the lights, we have to get external sockets put into the lampposts first then a special licence from County Council to allow us to put the lights up and installers to put them up and remove them every year.

Huge thanks again to volunteer Jill Compton (who has now moved away from Gamlingay) and all those who helped her put the event together for the village, to Peter Middlicott of All Growth Ltd for donating the Christmas trees again, to the Brogan Group for its donation towards the event and to all those who put donations into the collection for Christmas lights in Gamlingay. We hope to increase the number of lights in future.

The Parish Council continues to be supportive of action against climate change and supporting biodiversity and green initiatives in the village. Thanks to members of Climate Action Group (CAG) who hosted the village's Repair Café and a big thanks to Gwyn Williams for setting up the Big Rake Off, and for the orchard and hedge management, which you'll hear more about this evening. We've also supported courses in scything and traditional hedge laying this year – which

have been attended by volunteers. A further hedge has been laid in January by a great band of volunteers, with support from TCV.

Grass cutting was a particular challenge last year as we had to change contractors in the early part of the season, and had to play catch up with poor weather conditions throughout the rest of the season. The grass cutting contract is particularly complex and we're pleased to share that from April 2025, Cambridge Ground Care Services, who we've been working with over the past year, will be our grass cutting contractors. There is a very detailed spec that they work to which tries to ensure a balance between ensuring leisure access and enhancing biodiversity. This includes some areas being cut up to 15 times whereas others are only 7 and other things added in ad hoc, such as a firebreak strip for grass near properties, if we get a spell of very hot weather. This does make it quite a tricky contract to fulfil for the contractors but we've been very impressed with their attention to detail. In addition, the rewinding scheme for grass cutting continues to be trialled at St Mary's churchyard, which has been set up by the church.

A fair bit of time this past year has been spent by councillors, alongside other volunteers, planning for the 10-year anniversary of Millbridge Brook Meadows last May. 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 as well. The celebrations centred on the early May bank holiday weekend where nearly 300 people attended Gamlingay's Picnic on the Meadows, featuring birds of prey from Herrings Green Activity Farm and the burying of a time capsule by pupils from Gamlingay Village Primary. There was also an exhibition in the Eco Hub showcasing photographs, maps and artwork of the Eco Hub as well as the meadows from construction to opening. Other events during May included a visit to the community turbine, a wildlife walk for adults and a nature trail for GVP pupils, as well as a half term outdoor adventure for families.

Looking forwards to this summer, to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe and VE Day, on Tuesday May 6th, the Eco Hub will host a new exhibition capturing how Gamlingay residents remembered the events of that time and the celebrations that followed. The exhibition will run during normal Eco Hub hours until early June and then again in August when the war finally ended with the defeat of Japan.

The meadows will also play host on Saturday 28th June to a performance of Robin Hood by the travelling drama group, The Pantaloons. Some of you may know them from performances at locations like the RSPB at Sandy and Wimpole Hall in recent years. Tickets are on sale now – there's a QR code and web link on the leaflets on the table – and some of the proceeds will go back into the village. We'll be hoping for a lovely sunny long summer's day, so bring chairs, maybe a table, a picnic and a drink, or two, and have a great evening.

We agreed our budget for 2025-26 at our December meeting, at £238,150 within which the precept requirement is £157.50 Per Band D household this represents a small increase of 3.36% on the Parish Council element of your Council Tax (£ per annum per household).

Our most recent audited accounts for 23-24 are available online or on the table at the back.

Our Council is made up of 15 Parish Councillors and supported by two Clerks; you can find all our details on our website. During last year, we said goodbye to one councillor, Gareth Squance, and we continue to be keen to welcome more councillors. So we 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.

And thank you all for listening, if you have any questions on the chair's report or on anything else the Parish Council does, please do ask us during the Q&A at the end of the meeting. Thank you for listening.

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

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 2025-26

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;

S Martin (maternity leave)

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J Evans john.evans@gamlingay-pc.gov.uk

Richard Howe richard.howe@gamlingay-pc.gov.uk

Joseph Howell joseph.howell@gamlingay-pc.gov.uk

R Petch robertpetch@gamlingay-pc.gov.uk

W Boyne wendyboyne@gamlingay-pc.gov.uk

P Young paulyoung@gamlingay-pc.gov.uk

A Porter andrewporter@gamlingay-pc.gov.uk

5 vacancies

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

The precept for 2024-25 was £ 230 403