



Annual Report 2023/24

This report contains a brief summary of the activities of your Parish Council over the last financial year and outlines how we have managed the Parish Council's finances and assets. Join us at the meeting to find out more, ask questions and have your say.

**Annual Parish Meeting
Tuesday 23 April
7pm**

**at the Large Barn, Goosecroft,
Purley on Thames**

2023/24 has been a year of changes, renewal and some challenges.

Changes

May 2023 saw elections for the District and Parish Councils. Four of our existing Parish Councillors decided it was time for them to retire and put their feet up – Christine Collier, John Chapman, Rick Farrow, and Rick Jones. We welcome the four new Councillors who have joined us – Alex Benedict, Angie Grindley, Mandy Stone and Larry Grady.

On the District front there has been a complete change and we have three new District Councillors representing the ward of Tilehurst & Purley – Jane Langford, Janine Lewis, and Paul Kander.

Christopher Thompson, our Clerk for the past three years left at the end of March 2024. We wish Chris all the best in his future endeavours. We welcome Sharon Way who has taken on the role of Parish Clerk.

Renewal

We have installed solar panels on the Parish Office, the Bungalow and the Pavilion. Both the Parish Office and Pavilion only have an electricity supply, and it is expected that the provision of solar panels will reduce our need to draw power from the grid and hence help reduce our energy costs.



Solar Panels

We have been fortunate enough to obtain some funding from West Berkshire to part pay towards replacing some picnic tables at Goosecroft and Bucknell's Meadow.

Challenges



Flooding

One of the major events of the past year must be the flooding in the lower village during January when water levels just exceeded the levels experienced in 2013. We express our thanks all the Flood Wardens and other villagers whose efforts helped residents get through the experience. Arrangements were even put in place to get the children to school, even if part of the journey was by canoe.

We have had two separate incidents of damage to deal with. On one occasion the gate at Goosecroft was driven into and on a separate occasion the height barrier was also hit. It is likely that both of these items will need to be replaced.



Mapledurham Drive

*Graham Rolfe
Chairman of Council*

Recreation

The Recreation Committee has been very busy throughout the year and can look back at several major achievements and improvements to Parish Recreational facilities.

In addition to all the regular maintenance activities on facilities and equipment (which includes the Statutory safety inspections of playgrounds), the Committee has managed to:

- Replace an aged / "at end of life" childs' rocker in the Goosecroft.



New bench

- Replace old unsafe wooden picnic benches at the Goosecroft*
- Provide additional picnic benches and bench at Bucknells Meadow*



Table Tennis tables

- Provide 2 Table Tennis Tables at Bucknells Meadow*
- Purchase (in conjunction with a Football Foundation grant) new football goal posts for use at the Goosecroft.
- Carry out extensive hedge works adjacent to the Goosecroft Tennis Courts to maintain and improve the facility.

* Part Funded by a grant from West Berkshire

In addition to this a great deal of time has been committed to successfully applying for Planning Permission for the Goosecroft Ground Extension which can now proceed.

Looking forward to projects for the coming year:

- We are just about to replace the “Zip Wire” at Bucknells Meadow
- Working with Purley Sustainability Group to investigate the possibility of an Orchard in Bucknells Meadow.

It is very pleasing to see that all our Tenant Sports Clubs (Trenthams Bowls Club, Purley on Thames Cricket Club, Purley Jubilee Football Club and Purley Tennis Club) are thriving and providing recreational opportunities for so many.

*Martin Bishop
Chairman of Recreation*



Coloured picnic table

The Barn & Burial Ground



The Barn

The Barn located at the Goosecroft Recreation Ground, off Beech Road, Purley on Thames is an asset for the Parish and all Parishioners to enjoy, by hiring it for activities. To do so contact the Council’s Amenities Officer on 0118 984 4507. You can book either of the 2 halls or the whole Barn.

The Barn has been located here since 1992 and it has charm, magnificence and, dare I say, romantic appeal. Our 18th century Barn uses many 16th century timbers from a

previous Elizabethan Manor House and has been moved twice to different locations within the village.

It is enjoyed and used by regular hirers including many village-based clubs as well as for special occasions including weddings, parties and a Christmas Market.

The Council manages the Barn on behalf of the Parish and does not seek to make a profit from the Barn but to make enough money to ensure that it is a well-maintained and a desirable asset for our community.

Recently, we have added new curtains to improve the larger of the two halls, internal redecoration is partially completed, installed a new fire safety external gate and made improvements to the paper towel dispensers in the lavatories. I am sorry to mention this last, rather mundane enhancement, but it makes for a tidier, more cost-effective and environmentally friendly facility.

Other plans include a much-needed re-varnish of the external cladding. This has begun and the first stage is complete as the north-face of the Barn attracts moss which needed to be treated before varnishing can begin.

There is an active and lively group known as the Friends of Purley Barn (FOPB), who raise funds to help to pay for enhancements and represent the wishes of regular hirers. They work closely with the Barn and Burial committee and are always pleased to welcome others to join them by emailing fopbxmasmarket@gmail.com. Some of the Founder Members, Jean Chudleigh, Catherine Sampson and Debbie Mackay have recently retired and take with them the grateful thanks of myself and the Barn Committee. Others have joined under the new Chairmanship of Cllr Angela Grindley. So, please keep an eye out for new and interesting events.

For more details of how to hire the Barn, its facilities and the current charges along with booking forms please visit the Purley on Thames Parish Council website.

Burial Ground

The Burial Ground continues to be a much appreciated place of calm and this spring has been beautifully adorned by many daffodils.

This year we have carried out an audit of our Burial Records to ensure that they are accurate and up to date.

This has led to a review of the Burial ground Rules which have been agreed by Council and will be on our website and on the noticeboards by the time this report is published

Jane Langford
Chairman of Barn & Burial Ground



Daffodils in the Burial Ground

Highways and Footpaths

This committee is in some ways rather unfortunately named as the authority for dealing with Highways and Footpaths is West Berks Council and not the Parish Council. The Parish Council has no authority over roads or footpaths but does make representations to the Highways Authority as and when appropriate.

The committee oversees various elements of the Parish Council estate: -

Allotments

We have a site with 132 allotments of a range of sizes just off Winston Way for people to enjoy working on to grow their own produce whilst getting some exercise, fresh air, and having stunning views over the river valley. Currently all the allotments are occupied but the waiting list is short, and things do change, so if you are interested why not contact the office and put your name down?



The Allotments

Bins

The Parish Council provides and arranges the emptying of both litter bins and dog waste bins to try to help keep the village litter and dog mess free. There are also in the village (at present) some litter bins and 1 dog waste bin provided and serviced by West Berks Council. However, it seems that as part of budget cutbacks this service is likely to be withdrawn by West Berks although formal confirmation of this is awaited. Your Parish Council has already made plans, after consultation with the village, that in the event of this happening to take over responsibility for servicing these bins.

The Parish Council also provides a series of salt/grit bins and stocks them to help those in the Parish.

Noticeboards

The Council has a number of noticeboards around the village as well as in the Barn and Pavilion. The official office noticeboard is outside the front of the office. There are 9 others on which a schedule of meetings and contact details for the Council are displayed and which can also display events and groups based in the village. Anyone wanting notices to be displayed should contact the Parish Office - display is at the discretion of the Council and will depend on space (we suggest size A5 posters are best) availability of staff to update the boards - so give us plenty of notice. Generally commercial adverts will not be displayed.

Pikeshaw

These are woods owned by the Parish Council and in which tree work has recently taken place, removing some diseased trees, which have been replaced. From time to time, we do get complaints of anti-social behaviour in this area, and we would encourage anyone that comes across this type of activity to report it to both the Parish Council and the Police.



Pikeshaw

Streetlighting

Most streetlighting in the village is owned and managed by West Berks Council but the Parish Council does have a few streetlights it maintains and pays for. If in doubt just ask but generally for any issues it is likely to be a matter to report to West Berks.

We also provide dog waste bags - with the support of West Berks Council, and these are placed on the various dog bag stations around the village. If you want to help and take responsibility for restocking a dog waste bag station near you, please let us know – we are always happy to have willing volunteers from the parish.

We can also lend out litter pickers and provide waste sacks for anyone who wants to do any litter picking in the village - just contact the office.

So, a wide range of activities for this committee and if anyone can suggest a more suitable name for the committee to cover these activities feel free to contact us with your ideas.

Maria Abrams
Chairman Highways & Footpaths

Finally, we could not fail to make reference to Blount's Meadow in this report. The Council is well aware that changes there in the last year have caused concerns on the part of some in the village. Blount's Meadow is not Parish Council property. It is owned by Mapledurham Estates, and subject to compliance with planning and other rules and regulations it is down to them what they choose to do with it. There are rights of way over parts of Blount's Meadow, and it is the role of West Berks Council to ensure they are protected. If there is any activity on the site that requires planning permission, that again is an issue for West Berks Council and their planning team, who we know are monitoring the situation.

The Parish Council has no jurisdiction or control over what happens at Blount's Meadow and furthermore has to consider all points of view. On issues that have been raised, the Council has investigated complaints, advised where to refer them and continues to do so, but has no power to act.

Finance & Governance

The committee meets every month to review current and forecast performance against the budget and to review certain items required by law. It also regularly reviews and makes recommendations to make sure the internal rules and processes of the Council are working efficiently. A major role is to assist the other committees with their planning for long term and large budget items which may be outside the level of their usual annual budget.

Finance - how we use 'your' money

- **Income & Expenditure**

The Council has a legal responsibility to use public money wisely and carefully.

Over the past year the effects of Covid have waned but it appears we are now in a different world to 2019. The return of inflation of course is the major change but there are other changes which may well be permanent.

This has affected the budgeted income and expenditure. Our forecast income of £239.4 6k is £43.0k under budget principally due to a smaller contribution from the precept and developers (CIL) levy. Some of this is a phasing issue and we expect to recover some of the difference in 2024.

Our forecast expenditure of £280k is £ 29.0k above budget principally due to increased costs across the board partly in staff salaries and pensions, though other office costs dropped significantly. This has resulted in our reserves decreasing by £40.5k.

In 2022-23 the increase in the precept was limited to 4.7% (bringing the total precept to £165,000) following a year with no increase. In 2023-2024 the increase in the precept was at 0.135% taking the precept to £168,000. At this point inflation was running at over 10%.

For 2024-25 there is to be an increase in the precept from £168,000.00 to £180,000. This takes into account the last 2 years' inflation figures, the impact on the expenses of the Parish Council, and the fact that it is likely that the Parish Council will be faced with additional expenses for taking over litter bins and a dog waste bin currently provided and serviced by West Berk, but which they are proposing to give up. This amounts to an annual increase for a band D householder of £5.68 which is an increase of 6.92%

These figures are provisional as at 1 February 2024, as our accounts will not be finalised until later in the year.

Figure 1: Operating Income:

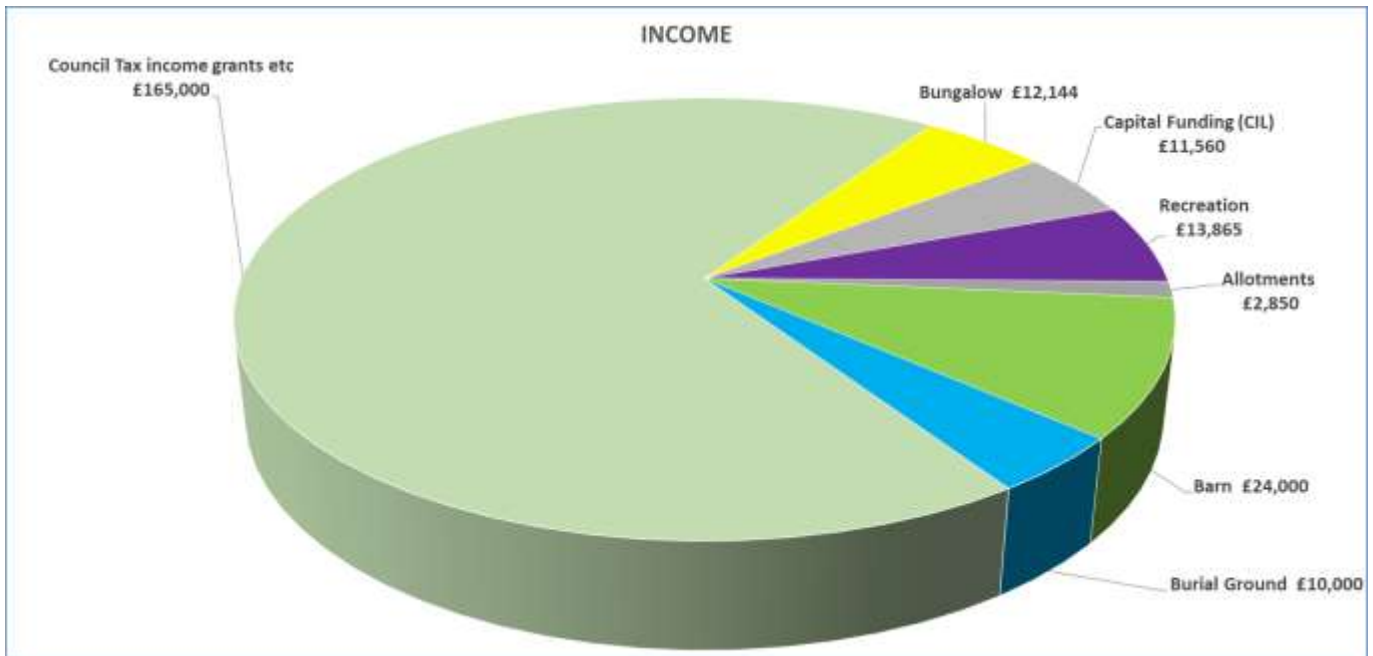


Figure 2: Running Costs:

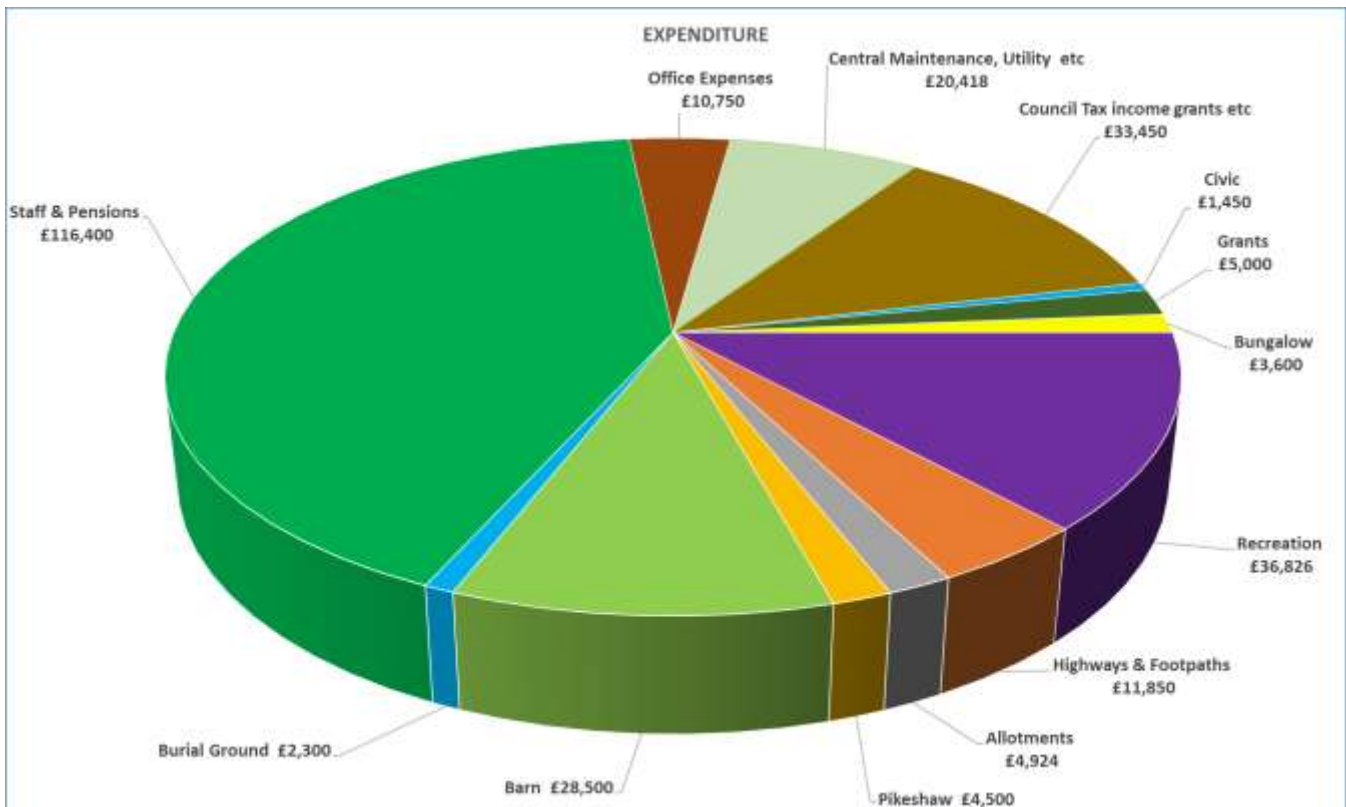
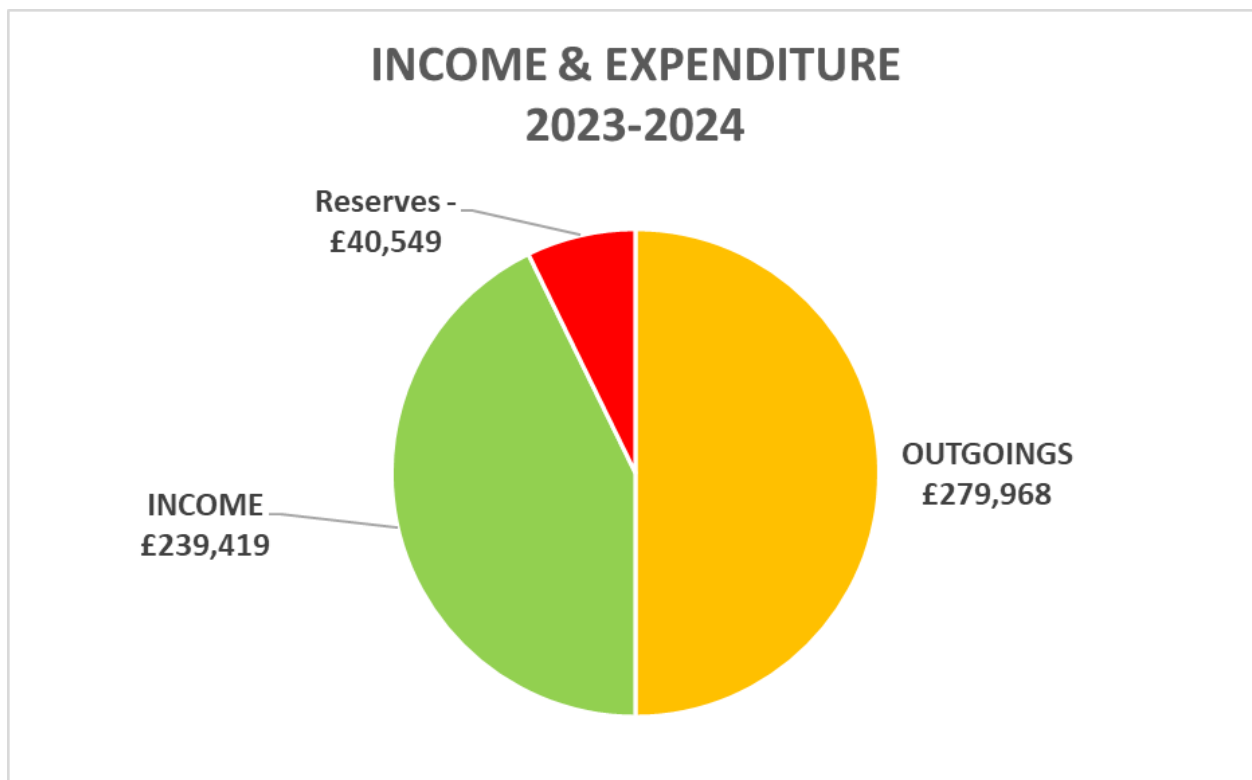


Fig. 3: Income & Expenditure

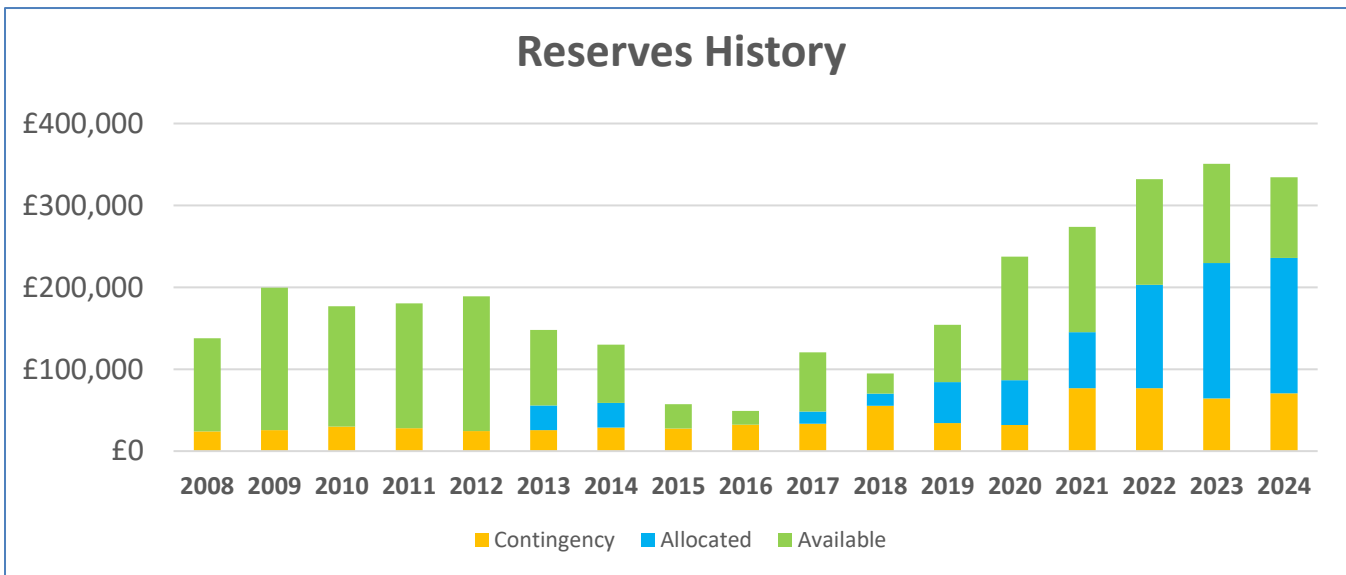
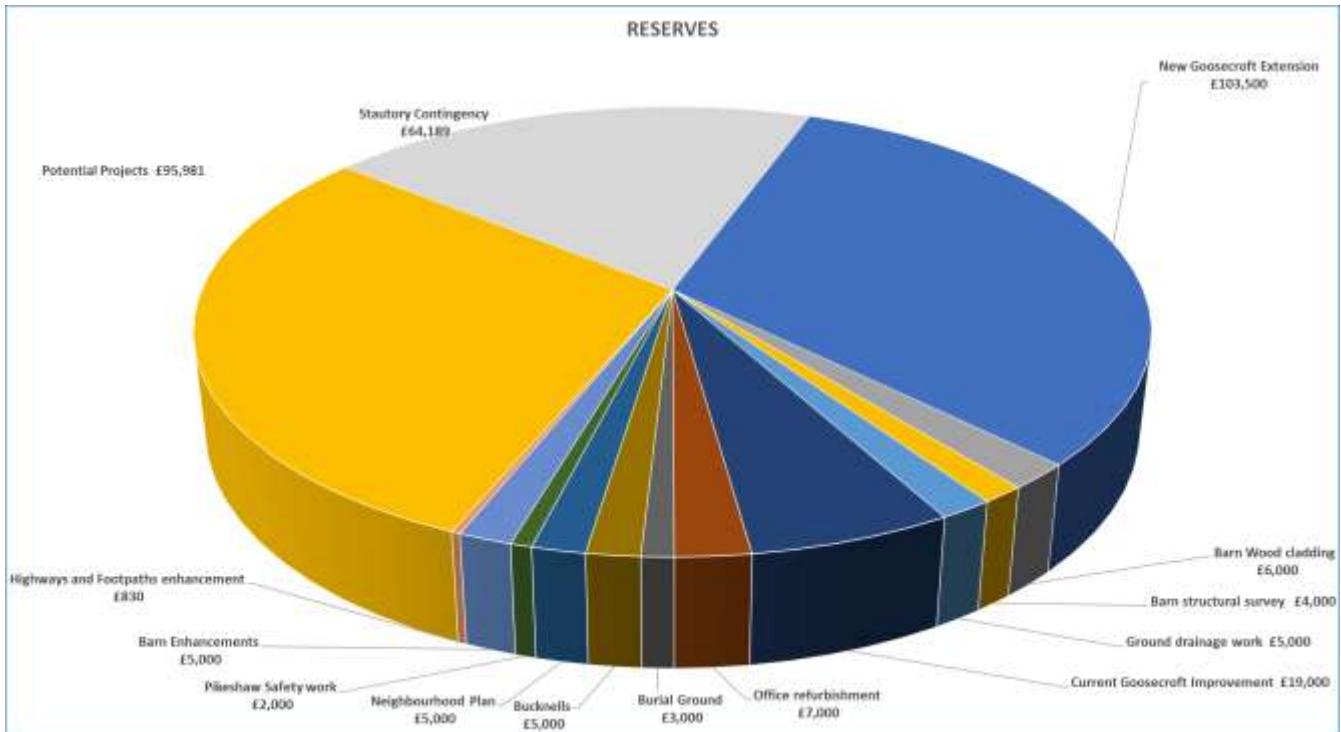


- **Reserves**

Additional costs this year have led to a small decrease in the level of reserves. We face the possibility of having to finance several very large projects over the next few years. In addition to costs associated with the Goosecroft expansion, hopefully largely covered by outside grants, items such as upgrading the water supply to the whole of the Goosecroft, resurfacing the car park and installing more facilities at Bucknall's Meadow are all very expensive and will require careful management of reserves and cash flow.

Our reserves are made up of several components:

- Contingency – reserves we need to keep as a cushion against our spending which we set at 25% of our annual forecast expenditure.
- Allocated – earmarked for specific projects. These projects could be major repairs or large infrastructure changes.
- Available – reserves we hold to enable flexibility to cater for long term projects, additional opportunities and emergencies. It includes monies ring-fenced.



There is more of village interest on the Parish Council website
www.purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk

Rob Wallace
 Chairman of Finance & Governance

How to contact us

Parish Office: Telephone: 0118 984 4507
Email: clerk@purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk
Write: Parish Office, Goosecroft Lane, off Beech Road,
Purley on Thames, Reading, RG8 8DR
Website: www.purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk (lots of contacts and
information)

Clerk: Sharon Way (from 1 April 2024)
Administrative Assistant: Cathy Gainsford
Amenities Officer: Colin Moses

Opening hours





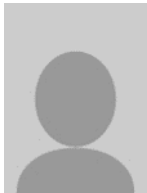











The Parish Office is now open to the public during the following hours:

Monday (except bank Holidays) 9.30am to 2.30pm

Thursday 2.30pm to 6.30pm

Councillors can be available for consultation on Thursday evenings,
between 5.00pm – 5.30pm, or at other times by appointment.

Councillors and Staff 2023/24

 Graham Rolfe Chairman 0118 941 7247	 George Nyamie Vice Chairman (via office)	 Martin Bishop Chairman Recreation (via office)	 Jane Langford* Chairman Barn (via office)	 Maria Abrams Chairman Highways (via office)	
 Rob Wallace 07958 482968 Chairman Finance	 Pamala Beddoes 0118 941 4186	 Judy Evans (via office)	 Virginia White (via office)	 Alex Benedict (via office)	
 Larry Grady (via office)	 Angie Grindley (via office)	 Mandy Stone (via office)	 Chris Thompson Parish Clerk 0118 984 4507	 Cathy Gainsford Admin. Asst. 0118 984 4507	 Colin Moses Amenities Officer 0118 984 4507

* Also our District Councillor. Our other District Councillors were Janine Lewis and Paul Kander.

Useful Numbers

Community Safety:

Police Non-Emergency 101
Lock Keeper 0118 941 7776

District Council:

West Berkshire Council 01635 551111
West Berkshire Council emergency out of hours 01635 42161
Streetcare 01635 519080

Purley Barn (via Parish Office) 0118 984 4507

Memorial Hall 07772 129 187

Social Clubs

Purley Sports & Social Club 0118 984 3061
Purley Park Social Club 0118 942 7047

Schools

Brookfield Specialist SEN School 0118 942 1382
Purley C.E. Primary School 0118 984 2384
Long Lane Primary School 0118 942 7187
Denefield School 0118 941 3458
Downsway Primary School 0118 942 1362
Theale Green Community School 0118 930 2741
Westwood Farm Junior School 0118 942 5182
Westwood Farm Infant School 0118 942 6113

Hospitals

Royal Berkshire 0118 322 5111
West Berkshire Community 01635 273 300

Doctors

The Boathouse Surgery, Pangbourne 0118 984 2234
Grovelands Medical Centre 0118 958 2525
Westwood Road Health Centre, Tilehurst 0118 942 7421
Tilehurst Village Surgery 0118 945 2612
Tilehurst Surgery Partnership, Tyler's Place 0118 942 7528

Travel

Reading Buses www.reading-buses.co.uk 0118 959 4000
ReadiBus www.readibus.co.uk 0118 931 0000
Carebus 0118 930 4837
First GW Trains www.gwr.com 0345 7000 125
Thames Travel www.thames-travel.co.uk 01865 785 400
Pangbourne & District Volunteer Centre 0118 984 4586
www.pangbourne-district-volunteers.org