

BUCKLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL



Mrs Ruth Johnson (Clerk to the Parish Council)
54 Levington Lane, Bucklesham, Ipswich, Suffolk IP10 0DZ

clerk@buckleshamparishcouncil.gov.uk

07854 712 734

Bucklesham Parish Council Annual Report 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 Clive Lenton, Bucklesham Parish Council Chair

It's Been Another Busy Year For Team Bucklesham

I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2025-26 with a summary of our achievements over the past year, and our plans for the year ahead. It has been another very busy year for Bucklesham Parish Council, and the second year for me in the role as Chair. The team have continued to work together brilliantly and achieved so much in only 12 months.

This year we have stepped up our leadership role – strengthening partnerships and providing much needed infrastructure. We have worked hard at communicating well with all residents to ensure their voices are heard. We will continue to be a friendly, welcoming, inclusive and forward-thinking community.

We are blessed with a group of Councillors, all with a wide range of knowledge and skills, and all of whom give their time and energy to ensure that all things Bucklesham are dealt with honestly, with sincerity, integrity, and independence.

A lot of what we do is supported by village volunteers: managing the Speed Indicator Device; the new Speed Watch Group; the new Highways Community Self-Help Scheme; the Litter Pickers; the Friends of the Playing Field; and the wonderful Community Council, who are the fundraising arm of the Parish Council and who put on all village events. Together, we make Team Bucklesham, and what a great team that is!



Bucklesham is Your Village

We have worked very hard at strengthening community engagement this year. We held regular Parish Council meetings, delivered Bucklesham Bugle newsletters to every home four times in the year, sent 48 Bugle Bulletin email alerts, and held consultation events in the Village Hall. This enabled residents to have their say, raise concerns, and contribute their views.

We will continue to seek the opinions of residents and ensure that local priorities guide our decisions. Residents are encouraged to attend Parish Council meetings and to contact us with their ideas, suggestions, comments and concerns, which we will endeavour to act upon.

Bucklesham Playing Field News

The project to replace the old Play Equipment had started in March 2025. After reading the Clerk's 'Renewal of Play Equipment Project' report, Councillors agreed on an action plan. It was clearly going to be a mammoth task which would need to include consulting the residents of the village, designing the area, obtaining quotes, fundraising, and grant applications.

The consultation event in April was well attended by residents, and lots of suggestions and requests were received. A small committee of willing stakeholders including Councillors, parents and the Clerk, met with play equipment contractors and designed the area following all the feedback from village children and their parents.

Four quotes were obtained and we set about raising the £103,000 needed to provide all that was requested.



Working with the fantastic Bucklesham Community Council, we organised three fundraising events. Firstly, a 'Bounce-athon' which saw village children (like Griff here) bouncing non-stop for 12 hours on a bouncy castle.

Secondly, a mini-fete held in Bucklesham Village Hall which was extremely well attended by residents.

Finally, 'A West End Christmas' saw Bucklesham's very own West End star Mark Connell and his friends sing songs from the shows and dazzle us with their talents. The total raised by fundraising was £7,500.

We successfully secured many grants, including £45,000 from East Suffolk Local CIL Play Fund, £30,000 from Tarmac LCF, and £1,000 from District Councillors Lee Reeves and Mike Ninnmey. In total we managed to raise all the money needed in just 8 months.

The old Play Equipment was removed by Terry Seagroatt, and a group of strong dads helped take down the final larger pieces on a sunny Saturday morning in March. The new equipment will be installed just after Easter and we are hoping that the opening ceremony will be on May Bank Holiday Monday.



We also installed a new seating area on the Playing Field in the Summer which we dedicated to our former Council Chair, David Brinkley.

The new Gazebo is a very welcome addition to the Field and a commemorative plaque ensures David will never be forgotten.

A shelter on the Field had been requested by many residents as it is a wide open space with little shade, and the gazebo proved to be well-used in the Summer heat. It has been much appreciated by the dog walkers during the many downpours of the winter months.

C375 Speed Reduction Campaign - We Didn't Know When We Were Beaten

Last year I reported that the 25 year campaign to reduce the 60mph speed limit on the C375 Brightwell Road had been unsuccessful, and we had passed on the baton to the school children's parents. However, we were minded to give it one more go with the enthusiastic persuasion of our new MP Jenny Riddell-Carpenter. Working with Bucklesham School Head Teacher Rachael Rudge and the school Governors, we re-wrote the requesting documentation and tried for a 40mph limit instead of the 30mph we had always pushed for. While this was not ideal, it was an improvement on current 60mph limit.

With Josh White, our new Highways Liaison Officer, on our side we finally persuaded Suffolk County Council to support our request, and subject to funding, the speed limit will finally be reduced to 40mph. We have been warned that the whole process could still take another 12 months, but we are confident that this time we will finally have achieved our goal.

We were unaware that the Parish Council would have to fund the speed limit reduction which will cost £13,700. Fortunately, we had the support of East Suffolk Council's Community Partnership Board, and in particular our Communities Officer Chloe Lee, and we secured a grant of £10,000 to go towards this amount.

A School Safety Zone of '20's Plenty' has already been installed on Main Road, and we hope that this initial improvement will have the desired effect of making our roads safer for all our children travelling to school.

We will continue to work with the school to help make a safer environment for all the children, and were pleased to provide them with a 'No Idling' banner which is attached to the playground fence.



Bucklesham Highwaymen Reign Supreme



Last summer the path to school had become almost impassable in places and it was full of stinging nettles, brambles and hemlock, making it very difficult for village children to walk to school safely. We were quoted £10,000 by Suffolk Highways to undertake the work, which was clearly out of the question.

Unperturbed by this, we set about organising our own Self-Help Scheme. Cllr Gemma Marriage, villager Terry Seagroatt, and I, undertook Highways training to ensure we were certificated and therefore fully insured to work on the Highway and lead a team of volunteers.

We were pleased to accept help from a gang of willing Highwaymen (and women) armed with shovels, spades, hedge cutters and loppers. Over two weekends in August, we cleared the entire half mile path from Potash to the school, widening parts of it that had been reduced to just one foot, back to an acceptable and safe width.

Following concerns about the speed at which vehicles travel through the village, we set up a Community Speed Watch Group in October. We have all had an initial informal meeting and some training thanks to friend of Bucklesham, Judi Hallett. Judi manages the Community Speed Watch Group in Ufford and has promised to continue to support us as we get up and running.

All volunteers have completed the required Police application forms and we are just waiting for approval before we can start the weekly sessions.

In the winter, the bottom of Levington Lane was flooded on an almost weekly basis. The flooding is caused by the lack of maintenance by Suffolk Highways as the 'grips' have not been cleared for many years, and this results in the water being unable to drain into the ditches. This issue was repeatedly reported to Highways but their response has been disappointing.

We have been informed that this road is not a priority and that lack of funds will not allow for the work to be completed in the near future. Despite our offers, Highways will not allow the Self-Help Scheme volunteers to undertake the work, nor will they allow the land owner of the adjacent fields to work on the Highway without their approved documentation.



We will of course continue to pursue this, and all other Highways issues in the village. We are working very closely with our Highways Liaison Engineer, Josh White, who cycles through Bucklesham daily, and is completely aware of all our issues. Our Clerk has met with Josh many times and we feel confident that he will continue to support us as best as he can within the limits of his role.

The Best Laid Planning Applications...

The Parish Council has been a Statutory Consultee on 18 planning applications in Bucklesham this year, often visiting the sites in question, and has invited all applicants to meetings where their applications were being discussed. We have listened to any concerns voiced by neighbours, and have often held additional meetings to those that were scheduled to enable residents to have their opinions heard and to allow Councillors to discuss these applications.

We are proud to have built up an excellent working relationship with the Planning Team at East Suffolk Council, and a reputation among local architects and planners as a co-operative Council. We are perceived to be a Council who are willing to engage and support Bucklesham residents in their endeavours to retain village assets and improve their village homes.



Following East Suffolk Council's Call For Sites, several parcels of land in the village have been identified as possibly suitable for future planning developments. We realise that this understandably causes anxiety among residents and, as we are all residents of the village ourselves, the Councillors share in that concern.

Cllr Lynda Seagroatt and the Clerk attended an East Suffolk Council planning seminar and we are aware that they have to build many more homes to reach the target set by central government. We will endeavour to inform all residents at the earliest opportunity if and when we are informed of any developments that may be proposed for the village.

As we have done in the past, we will engage with any developers and build working relationships as we feel this is in the best interests of all residents. We will ensure we organise opportunities for all residents to view any plans in the form of open consultation events and public exhibitions. This will allow residents to study any plans and have their questions answered by the developers.

Management of Bucklesham's Allotments

We continued to manage Bucklesham's Allotments this year and once again made many improvements.

With the help of two tenants, we cleared some land at the end of the Allotments, making two new plots. This allowed two residents who were on the waiting list to start cultivating a much desired plot of their own.

To protect the area we fenced in the entrance and installed a notice board with important contact details and Health and Safety information. Two large gates were installed and these are locked and unlocked by tenants on a daily basis.

Cllr Gemma Marriage, the Clerk and I undertook two inspections, in October and March, to ensure that all tenants were abiding by the tenancy agreement and that the area was being well maintained and looked after. There continues to be a long waiting list for plots and priority is always given to Bucklesham residents.

Looking After Bucklesham for All Its Residents (Humans and Otherwise)

Caring for our environment, our wildlife, and all Bucklesham residents regardless of their species, is very important to us, and we have continued to work hard to improve bio-diversity in Bucklesham again this year.

We planted 1,000 daffodil bulbs donated by East Suffolk Council, around the village and on the Playing Field, which produced a wonderful display in March. We also planted 500 bluebell bulbs among the trees in the Woodland Walkway, which were kindly donated by Bucklesham residents Keith and Sue Houldey.



Cllr Gemma Marriage organised a Stag Beetle Stack Creation Day in the Summer which was very well attended by many village children. We are keen to share the Field with all wildlife, and Gemma has plans for continuing this work on an annual basis with workshops and Conservations Days each Summer Holiday.

We planted more trees and hedges on the Playing Field, including walnut and oak trees, and fruit trees donated by Cllr Lynda Seagroatt and her husband Terry. In the years to come these will produce a harvest of fruits and all residents are welcome to help themselves.

We also took ownership of a beautiful bug hotel, made by Terry, which already has a number of inhabitants.

By providing a refuge through a bug hotel, we are not only creating a support system for local wildlife, but also enhancing the health and productivity of the whole Playing Field. Plus, it's a fascinating way to observe nature for all village residents – as long as you have an hour or two to lose while you watch.

We are committed to protecting the natural environment and balancing the needs of people and wildlife.



Bucklesham Village Hall



Bucklesham Village Hall Committee often struggle with recruiting volunteers to serve as Hall Trustees, and this year they asked the Parish Council if we would consider becoming Sole Trustee.

A lengthy consultation took place, with the Committee surveying all Hall user groups and all residents of the village. The response was overwhelmingly in favour of the Parish Council taking on this role, and therefore at the Village Hall AGM this April, we will become Sole Trustee of the Hall.

The Village Hall Committee will continue to manage the Hall on a day-to-day basis, and the Parish Council will merely oversee this and have legal responsibility. Cllr Lynda Seagroatt, Cllr Rhea Gardner, and I will stand as representatives of the Parish Council on the Village Hall Committee, ensuring a vital link. The Parish Council Clerk is also the Clerk of the Hall so this will be very helpful and ensure continuity.

We have already applied for a grant from the Valencia Landfill Communities Fund to renovate the kitchen and knock through to the Committee room. We hope that this will 'future proof' the Hall, and allow for an increase in revenue as the Committee Room will be able to be hired out by smaller groups and individuals while the Main Hall is used by larger groups.

Collaborative Working

This year we have formed many new working relationships, and continued to work hard on our existing ones.

The Clerk met up with our new Community Police Officer, PC Arlene Ell, who has been a very welcome presence in the village, often keeping an eye on things late at night. PC Ell visited the Church Lunch in March and spent considerable time chatting to all of the attendees and sampling the meals on offer. She has also patrolled at the school at drop-off and pick-up times.

We continued to work with Bucklesham Solar Farm and successfully negotiated a Community Benefit Fund agreement, which will see an annual sum paid to the Parish Council once the Solar Farm is producing energy. This will be spent on village projects and supporting village groups.

We are indebted to our District Councillors Lee Reeves and Mike Ninnmey, who between them, attended every Parish Council meeting during the year. Their generosity and support was endless and they often contributed significantly in Parish Council discussions, which was very much appreciated; their knowledge of local issues is extremely valuable to us.

Cllr Rhea Gardner and Cllr Kat McDonald attended Felixstowe Peninsular Community Partnership meetings, and connections made here enabled us to secure funding for many village projects.

The Clerk has continued to work closely with many fellow Clerks from neighbouring Parish Councils, and many from elsewhere in the county. These connections have helped on numerous occasions when looking for advice, experience and ideas.

Cllr Kathryn Roper has been our Suffolk Association of Local Councils rep and brought many new ideas to the Council, including the implementation of the village's Emergency Plan.

Cllr Trevor Bickers represented us at the Cross Parish Group of Councils who are all working together to monitor local planning developments and support each other in these areas.

Cllr Lynda Seagroatt represented us on the Village Hall Committee, and both Lynda and I are active members of the Community Council. This ensures a vital link between the Parish and Community Councils. The relationship between the Parish and Community Council is as strong as it has ever been and we will continue to work together in the years to come.

Managing the Purse Strings

The whole Council is responsible for managing the finances effectively and ensuring that lawful financial practices are followed. In November, the Clerk prepared an annual budget for approval by the Council. Most of the budget is financed by the precept, which is the Parish Council element of Council Tax. The Council also receives some income from the Allotments, although there is a commitment not to make a profit from the tenants, and any money collected is used to maintain the site.

We are very mindful that we have a huge responsibility to ensure villagers get value for their money, therefore a great deal of time goes into carefully planning for any expenditure. The cost of many services has increased dramatically once again this year and this had a knock-on effect on our budgeting.

For the financial year 2025-2026, the precept was £14,159. The amount increased by only 5% in recognition of the need to keep the figure as low as possible whilst still delivering essential services and community priorities. The Parish Council's element of Council Tax for a Band D property in Bucklesham in 2025-2026 was £57.09 a year, that's just £1.09 a week.



We have spent our Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL funds) wisely again this year. We purchased the much-requested gazebo and also undertook essential maintenance on the Playing Field, fenced in the Allotments and purchased new signs, supported the Village Hall with grants for improvements, and used nearly £20,000 to contribute to the Play Equipment Project. This money was paid to the Parish Council because of the new Oak Tree View development, and we still have £15,000 remaining.

We always ask residents for ideas on how you would like us to spend the CIL funds so if you have any projects you think would be suitable please let us know. It can only be used to fund *'the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of local infrastructure'* and not on-going costs of the Council.

We are acutely aware of the pressures of the cost of living for so many villagers and we will continue to find ways to keep any increase in the Precept as minimal as possible. We certainly believe that residents *did* get value for money, considering all that we have achieved.

The Year Ahead

So as you can see, it has been a very busy, productive year, but we will not rest on our laurels. Once the new Play Equipment is installed on the Playing Field, we will be looking at erecting a fence around the area. This is something that has been requested for many years and we will be actively pursuing this.

Following attendance at East Suffolk Council's Marmot Place event, we have been inspired into organising free community 'get-togethers' which we will be calling our 'Cuppas and Cakes Café'.

This venture will be a joint enterprise with Bucklesham Community Council, and we envisage hosting the Café four times a year in the Village Hall.



On offer will be free cups of tea and coffee, with cake, good conversation, laughter, and a game or two of cards for those who would like to join in. This will be an opportunity for neighbours to meet up in an informal, comfortable setting, reducing isolation and loneliness, and will be an opportunity for us to signpost any residents to help and support that they may need as a result of living in a rural community.

This coming year, we also intend on striving to achieve the Bronze Award with the Local Council Award Scheme. This scheme recognises the excellent work of local councils and we have been encouraged to apply by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils. There will be a lot of work involved, but we are not afraid of that, and we are confident that we can achieve our goal – so watch this space.

At this time I would like to recognise the hard work of our Parish Council Clerk, Ruth, who is always on hand to help out at a moment's notice, organise and remind your merry band of Parish Councillors of upcoming meetings and events, and is a constant source of knowledge and support to us all – Councillors and villagers alike.

Finally, I would like to thank all residents for their support over the last year, and look forward to continuing working hard as your Parish Council Chair in the year ahead, leading your Councillors and our Clerk in our endeavours to keep Bucklesham such a wonderful place to live.

Clive Lenton

Bucklesham Parish Council Chair April 2026



Bucklesham Parish Councillors April 2026