



WOOLMER GREEN PARISH COUNCIL



Annual Report 2024-2025



PARISH COUNCIL

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Parish councils are the lowest tier of local government, responsible for representing and serving small communities, usually in rural areas or small towns. It has elected councillors who make decisions on local issues and are consulted by borough and county councils on matters affecting their area, such as planning, highways, and local services. While they have limited powers compared to larger councils, they play a crucial role in grassroots democracy, influencing local services and acting as a voice for residents. Parish councils can also raise funds through a local tax called a precept.

Councillors are elected to serve a four-year term and the current term began in May 2023.

### Woolmer Green Parish Councillors

#### **Andy Gribble, Chairman**

Transport, Staffing Committee, Young Person Liaison.

#### **Phil Corke, Vice Chairman**

Village Hall, Community, Staffing Committee.

#### **Tim Dix**

Planning, Hall Grounds.

#### **Sarah Hall**

Finance, Staffing Committee, Allotment Liaison. Treasurer of the Allotment Committee.

#### **Rob Horton**

Planning, Environment.

#### **Grant Pinney**

Village Hall, Community.

### Clerk to the Council

Janet Pearce

The clerk is the chief officer and responsible financial officer of a parish council, ensuring its smooth operation and legal compliance. They provide administrative support, prepare agendas and minutes for meetings, implement council decisions, and offer advice on local government law and procedures. The clerk manages finances and may oversee local services and projects. Acting as a neutral and professional advisor, they help councillors make informed decisions while ensuring transparency and accountability in council affairs.

### Borough Councillors

Councillors Julie Cragg, Terry Mitchinson and Roger Trigg.

### County Councillor

Councillor Tony Kingsbury.

### Member of Parliament

Andrew Lewin MP

# HALL AND GROUNDS



At the end of July, the Barleyfields Family Centre, built in 2010 as an extension to the village hall by the County Council, was officially closed. While the facility is legally owned by the Parish Council, it remains leased to the County Council until June 2035.

Following the closure, the Parish Council engaged in discussions with the County Council regarding the future of the building. Settlement terms for the surrender of the lease have been proposed, and alternative uses for the space has been discussed. However, as of yet, no final decision has been reached by the County Council.



The village hall bar has been managed for many years by Tornado Events. Company owner Dave has moved out of the area, and the Parish Council extends its grateful thanks to him for his support over the years. New arrangements have now been agreed with Jackie, who runs the Red Lion in the village, to take over the management of the bar.



Keeping the village hall looking its best is a top priority for the Parish Council as it generates a significant income and is a popular facility that is hired to individuals and organisations for a wide variety of uses including sports, parties, meetings and wedding ceremonies.

During 2024/25 the Parish Council budgeted for painting the outside woodwork, re-lacquering the hall floor and renewing the wedding license. However, there are always issues that crop up unexpectedly and this year has been no exception which has proved very costly. Unexpected items included a new curtain track costing £1,053, a replacement pressurisation unit for the heating £1,099, a new boiler to service the showers £2,750, repairs to a manhole £540 and a replacement fire alarm panel £1,730.

The Parish Council is immensely grateful to our County Councillor, Tony Kingsbury who donated £1,061 towards the new boiler from his Locality Budget. This has helped to alleviate the high hall costs this year.



The final £5,000 instalment of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant, awarded following a successful application by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, was spent on replacing the bark surface under the slide play equipment in the Garden Road playground with a new resin surface.

The bark surface was difficult to maintain to a satisfactory standard so as well as looking much smarter it will last for many years.



Other work carried out in the hall grounds included reattaching the football stop net costing £670 and replacing three rotten posts on the basket swing, £1,025. To alleviate flooding in Hall Lane the gully soak aways were cleared of debris.



## PLANNING



At the beginning of 2024, Gladman Developments submitted an outline planning application for the development of land to the rear of the car dealership and Lessiters. In October, the Parish Council met with a representative from Gladman Developments to discuss the site. During this meeting, we were informed that once all preparatory work had been completed, the land would be sold to a developer for construction.

The Parish Council reiterated its concerns regarding potential flooding, an issue it has consistently raised with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council throughout the Local Plan process. Additionally, the Council remains opposed to the approved access road, which is to be located north of the village. Our preference, as outlined during the Local Plan examination and endorsed by the planning inspector, was for access to be provided through the car dealership site, which is also earmarked for development. However, despite our objections, this recommendation was not adopted.



The Parish Council attended a community consultation event in Knebworth, organized by Countryside Partnerships, to review the masterplan for the development of the KB1 and KB2 sites, which have been allocated in the North Herts Local Plan for approximately 384 homes. The planned road access to both sites is via Park Lane.

A local petition has been launched calling for an additional road to be constructed, linking KB1, rear of Deard's End Lane, around the edge of KB2, with an exit onto Wych Elm Lane. The aim is to alleviate congestion in Knebworth but this could potentially divert traffic onto London Road via Bridge Road, which would not be a desirable outcome for Woolmer Green. However, Countryside Partnerships had already consulted on and received approval for the transport network within the development.



The former vet premises at 22A London Road has lain dormant for several years now and has had three planning applications submitted and approved during that time. The most recent application proposed erecting an additional storey and converting the building into two flats which was granted in December.

The commercial premises to the rear of the former vets, 22B London Road, has been granted permission to convert it into one dwelling and a planning application has been submitted.



The Parish Council responded to eight planning applications throughout the year.

## TRANSPORT



It is over three and a half years since plans for a puffin crossing on London Road to install a safe crossing to and from the shops by Kellard House was granted permission. Throughout those years the Parish Council, with assistance from our County and Borough Councillors, has pursued the issue with Hertfordshire Highways and Welwyn Hatfield Enforcement. The matter was also raised by residents at the Annual Parish Meeting in 2024.

Welwyn Hatfield Enforcement has obtained legal advice and arranged a meeting with Hertfordshire Highways and the site owner on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.



A County Council consultation on the B197 Safer Routes to School scheme, which aims to make walking safer and more convenient, took place during September 2024. The Parish Council has been campaigning for London Road to be made safer for many years and strongly supports the scheme.

Shortly after the County Council consulted on introducing 20mph zones in residential roads throughout Woolmer Green. The Parish Council's view is that speeding is not an issue in these areas, and it would be difficult to enforce if it occurred.

The main aim is to calm traffic on London Road and any available funding should prioritise the Safer Routes to School Scheme.



The Parish Council asked to meet with Knebworth Parish Council following publication of a map that had circulated on social media depicting an arc ring road from north of the Knebworth boundary in Stevenage Road to the Woolmer Green development site behind the car dealership. Knebworth Parish Council's idea for a new road differed from the published map as it proposed joining the Swangley's Lane development to Woolmer Green to divert traffic from Knebworth high street.

Woolmer Green Parish Council thought it highly unlikely any such road would materialise, but it agreed it would resist any proposal to introduce a new road that encouraged more traffic through Woolmer Green and weakened the Green Belt between the two villages.

## ENVIRONMENT



Following concerns from a resident that the pond in New Road was overgrown and contained a non-native invasive species (*Crassula helmsii*), Grant Shapps MP visited the village to discuss the issue with local residents and the Parish Council.

To gauge public opinion, he conducted a survey by writing to residents and later shared the results with the Parish Council:

- Total responses: 174
- Number of responses saying "The overgrowth should be cleared": 156 (89.66%)
- Number of responses saying "The pond should be left as it is": 18 (10.34%)

For many years, the Parish Council has sought expert advice from Hertfordshire County Council's Countryside Management Service (CMS) on appropriate intervention for unowned land and best practices for maintaining and enhancing pond biodiversity. In 2007, CMS developed a management plan for the common land and pond, which the Parish Council continues to follow.

Upon receiving the survey results, the Council forwarded them to CMS and requested a reassessment to ensure the current approach remains appropriate. A land management officer from CMS visited the pond in February 2025 to evaluate the Parish Council's maintenance programme. Following his assessment, he provided a written report confirming that the current management strategy remains appropriate and did not recommend any changes.

## MEETING OUR NEW MP



The Parish Council was delighted to meet the new MP for Welwyn Hatfield, Andrew Lewin, in



September. Mr Lewin invited Parish and Town Councils from across the Borough to an introductory meeting to discuss important local issues.

Mr Lewin's Senior Parliamentary Assistant, Josh Lee, met with Parish Councillors at its January meeting. He said Mr Lewin's office is keen to work closely with the Parish Council and would take up any issues the Council wished to raise.



Janet Pearce  
Clerk to Woolmer Green Parish Council  
Village Hall, Hall Lane  
Woolmer Green, Hertfordshire  
SG3 6XA

Countryside & Rights of Way Service  
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Herts SG13 8DN  
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Email: [andrew.taylor@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.taylor@hertfordshire.gov.uk)  
Date: 11<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Dear Janet

**Re: Woolmer Green Pond**

I am writing to confirm my thoughts on the ongoing management of Woolmer Green Pond following my site visit on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2025, and in relation to the pond survey response which you have recently received.

In general I would reiterate advice provided by the Countryside Management Service in the past. The pond serves as a good example of a wildlife pond, and the good variety of marginal and aquatic plants can be expected to support a diverse range of species including amphibians and invertebrates. I note that great crested newts, a European Protected Species, were confirmed to be present in the pond through eDNA testing in 2021.

The limited maintenance of the pond and its surrounds which is currently carried out by the parish council is entirely appropriate to the pond from an ecological point of view. This maintenance should continue, including:

- Annual removal of self-set ash saplings.
- Rotational coppicing of willows. In 2025 this should include the willow at the south-western corner of the pond.

There is no requirement for any more significant intervention. The invasive non-native species *Crassula helmsii* is present in the pond but national advice on the potential to eradicate this species, as summarised on the parish council's website, is unchanged. Manual removal would be ineffective, and the impact on the pond's wildlife from attempting control by herbicide would far outweigh the potential benefit. Accepting the presence of *Crassula* while other wildlife continues to thrive remains the best option.

The small area of common reed on the southern side of the pond is a valuable habitat in its own right and contributes to the diversity of habitats within the pond. This does not currently require management, as it takes up a relatively small proportion of the total area of the pond. As a guideline, you should aim for around two thirds of the pond to be open water and consider vegetation management in the future if this is no longer the case. Given the presence of *Crassula*, any future vegetation management within the pond should follow strict biosecurity protocols – refer to the Check Clean Dry campaign for more information: [Check Clean Dry » NNSS](#).

I hope the above is helpful. Please do come back to me if you require any further advice.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Taylor  
Projects Lead, Land Management  
Countryside & Rights of Way Service

## COMMUNITY

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Wheels on Woolmer Green

Despite the wet weather, Wheels on Woolmer Green was a great success, drawing strong support from the community. Thanks to The Red Lion and the local ice cream provider, who supplied the trophies for prize winners. A fantastic £267.49 was collected in donations and, following a request from one of the car show volunteers, the Parish Council agreed to split the proceeds between Herts Young Homeless and Alzheimer's Research, ensuring the event not only brought people together but also supported important causes.

Village Day

Village Day in June was a great success, with sunshine bringing out crowds of enthusiastic residents and stallholders. There were amusements and rides for the children and the talented Splitz Dance students entertained with their energetic performance in the hall. The ever-popular pet show saw plenty of adorable and very well-behaved dogs taking part in the pet competition. A huge thank you to Councillors Phil Corke and Grant Pinney for organising such a fantastic day for the community.

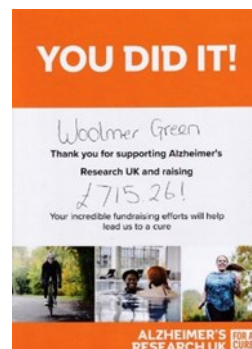
Warhammer Club

Warhammer is a tabletop strategy game that combines model building, painting, and tactical gameplay. The Woolmer Green Warhammer Club, run by the Parish Council, provides a welcoming space for strategy, creativity, and shared enthusiasm for the hobby.

In August the club celebrated its one-year anniversary with a day of strategic wargaming and model painting. The event also included a model painting competition, where attendees voted for their favourite designs.



Carols round the Tree



The Carols round the Tree event brought the community together in festive spirit, with a fantastic turnout and a heartwarming atmosphere. Thanks to the generosity of residents, £271.70 was raised on the night, adding to the £338.56 collected by the Woolmer Green Band at previous events and £105 raised via JustGiving. In total, an impressive £715.26 was donated to Alzheimer's Research, making a real difference for a vital cause. The Parish Council thanks Councillor Grant Pinney for leading the carols and to everyone who joined in to make the evening so special.

Community Award



At the end of September, the Parish Council bid farewell to Julie Boles, our dedicated village hall caretaker for 17 years, as she embarked on her well-earned retirement in Scotland. To celebrate her final day, Councillor Sarah Hall and the Clerk joined Julie for coffee and cake at Lessiters.

In recognition of her outstanding service to the community, the Council was delighted to present her with the Annual Community Award, honouring her years of commitment and hard work in maintaining the village hall as a welcoming space for all.

Grants

£50 was donated to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

£400 was donated to Woolmer Green Band for playing at Parish Council events which would help pay for hire of the village hall for rehearsals.

St. Michael's Church was awarded £500 towards maintenance of the church yard.

Remembrance Service

On Sunday, 10th November, Parish Councillors attended the Remembrance Service, paying tribute to those who served and sacrificed for our country. In a moment of reflection Parish Council Chairman Andy Gribble laid a poppy wreath at the war memorial on behalf of the community.

In preparation for the 80th anniversary of D-Day in 2025, the Parish Council and the Church worked together to have the war memorial professionally cleaned, as a tribute to those it honours.

Litter Pick

As part of Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring Clean initiative, on one Sunday in March, community volunteers took part in a village litter pick. We collected ten bags of litter, improving the appearance of our roads and public spaces. Grateful thanks to everyone who participated. As a 'thank you' all were treated to a free cuppa at the market.



Staff and Volunteers

The Parish Council extends grateful thanks to the dedicated staff who help keep our community spaces clean, welcoming, and well-maintained. A special thank you to Peter and Abdul, whose hard work ensures the village hall runs smoothly throughout the year.

We are delighted to welcome our new caretaker, Pete, who has already proven to be a fantastic addition to the team.

We are also incredibly grateful to our wonderful volunteers that deliver the newsletter, inspect the playgrounds and a particular mention to Andrew and Bruce who do regular litter picking and Jenny for her tireless efforts in planting and tending the village planters, bringing colour to our village.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

2023/24	Receipts:	2024/25
50,642.25	Hall Lettings	56,271.29
8,016.87	Barleyfield's Family Centre	6,549.21
320.00	Security	0.00
2,390.65	Pitch Fees	3,016.50
255.00	Bar	385.00
1,525.10	Farmers' Market Income	1,492.50
510.00	Car Park	1,810.00
164.10	Clothes Bank	257.68
723.31	Allotments	759.60
702.32	Interest on Investments	1,214.24
	Entertainment Fund :	
1,404.50	Village Day	1,230.00
1,607.99	Woolyfest	0.00
940.60	Newsletter Advertising	831.50
1,570.42	Other	857.74
13,345.00	Other income	6,190.50
84,118.11	TOTAL RECEIPTS	80,865.76
	Payments:	
53,322.16	Payroll	53,524.70
	Hall Maintenance :	
4,300.60	Insurance	4,595.75
7,166.56	Water, Gas, Electricity, Waste	10,722.12
7,111.98	License, Safety, Supplies	6,758.30
	Grounds Maintenance :	
8,514.39	Grounds	7,792.49
317.50	Playgrounds	6,974.75
723.31	Allotments	759.60
1,375.58	Office Expenses	1,073.29
165.00	Publicity	165.00
495.00	Audit & legal fees	837.30
910.57	HAPTC, CDA, CPRE	945.99
1,119.99	Grants	966.66
548.04	Sundry Expenses	856.96
	Entertainment Fund :	
665.36	Village Day	125.00
1,117.17	Woolyfest	-
700.00	Newsletter	730.00
1,570.78	Other	877.76
	Non Recurring Payments:	
22,071.02	Hall Maintenance	17,072.68
1,520.00	Dropped Kerb & Sockets	-
-	Wedding License	1,300.00
250.00	Planning Consultant	105.60
556.62	Election	-
0	Contingency	0
114,521.63	TOTAL PAYMENTS	116,183.95
-30,403.52	Income less Expenses	-35,318.19
28,836.00	Precept	30,278.00
-1,567.52	Surplus/Deficit	-5,040.19
39,965.44	BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD	38,397.92
38,397.92	TOTAL FUND	33,357.73