

# WOOLMER GREEN PARISH COUNCIL



Annual Report  
2025-2026

# PARISH COUNCIL

A parish council is the lowest tier of local government and represents the interests of a local community. It is made up of elected councillors who work to improve the parish by managing local services and facilities. The Council is consulted by borough and county councils on matters affecting their area, such as planning, highways, and local services and play a crucial role in acting as a voice for residents.

At the end of September, Parish Councillor Rob Horton stepped down from the Council following his move out of the village. Rob joined the Parish Council in 2019 and has been a dedicated and active member throughout his time in office. The Council extends its sincere thanks to him for his valuable contributions, commitment, and support over the years.

There was one application to fill the council vacancy from Jackie Castle-Ridpath. Jackie was formally co-opted at the October Parish Council meeting and we look forward to working with her.

Councillors are elected to serve a four-year term and the current term will end in May 2027.

## Woolmer Green Parish Councillors

### **Andy Gribble, Chairman**

Transport, Staffing Committee, Young Person Liaison.

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

Village Hall, Community, Staffing Committee.

### **Jackie Castle-Ridpath**

### **Tim Dix**

Planning, Hall Grounds.

### **Sarah Hall**

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

### **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 and Terry Mitchinson



All of us at the Parish Council were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of our Borough Councillor, Roger Trigg, on 23 January.

Roger served the residents of Welwyn Hatfield with great dedication for over 25 years, including a term as Mayor, and became our Borough Councillor in 2016.

Throughout his years of public service he worked tirelessly on behalf of local residents and was always willing to listen, offer guidance and support community initiatives.

We are grateful for his longstanding commitment to our community and for the support he gave to the Parish Council and the residents we serve. His experience, knowledge and willingness to help will be greatly missed.

## County Councillor

Councillor Tony Kingsbury.

## Member of Parliament

Andrew Lewin

## Change of Website and Email

The Council resolved to transition the Parish Council's website to a .gov.uk domain to ensure the website is compliant with current accessibility and transparency requirements. The Council worked with Parish Online who developed the website and the new domain name is [woolmergreenparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://woolmergreenparishcouncil.gov.uk)

Moving to a .gov.uk website and email system ensures the Council's website meets government accessibility standards and supports compliance with transparency regulations for parish councils. In addition, .gov.uk email addresses help clearly identify councillors and officers as official representatives of the Parish Council and provides a more secure and professional means of communication.

## Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

Woolmer Green Parish Council responded to the Borough Council consultation in September and the Government consultation in April on the proposed reorganisation of local government in Hertfordshire into two, three or four unitary authorities.

The Council supported the creation of two unitary authorities as this would minimise unnecessary boundary changes and provide a clearer and more effective structure. The Council believes this model offers the best balance between efficiency, financial resilience and local accountability, while maintaining strong links between Woolmer Green and neighbouring communities such as Knebworth, Datchworth, Welwyn, Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage.

## REMEMBERING JUDITH WATSON



Parish councillors and staff were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Judith Watson in June, at the age of 90, following a long illness.

Judith moved to Woolmer Green in the 1980s and quickly became a passionate advocate for the village. Alongside the late Enid Fairhead, she helped establish the Woolmer Green Residents Association and represented the community as a councillor on Welwyn Parish Council.

During her time there, Judith felt that Woolmer Green was not sufficiently represented and that the village's specific needs and priorities were often overlooked. With characteristic determination and resilience, she led the campaign for the village to become independent. This goal was achieved in 2000 with the creation of Woolmer Green Parish Council, overcoming significant bureaucratic hurdles at the time.

Judith became the first Chairman of the new council, a role she held on two occasions, serving a total of seven years, and she served 13 years overall as a parish councillor. Her drive, vision and persistence laid the foundations for the active and effective Parish Council that serves Woolmer Green today. She also served as Chair of Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils for three years, supporting local councils across the county.

Her commitment extended to many other community initiatives, including helping to establish the village allotments, orchard and wildflower meadow, and campaigning for road safety improvements—particularly the introduction of a 30mph speed limit on the B197, which was realised this year.

In recognition of her exceptional dedication and long-standing service, the Parish Council has posthumously awarded the Community Award to Judith. Her contribution has left a lasting legacy that continues to benefit the village.

The community has raised £642.92 towards the funding of a memorial bench to honour Judith's dedication and serve as a lasting tribute to her tireless work for the village.

# HALL & GROUNDS

## WiFi Upgrade

The Council has upgraded the WiFi in the hall to provide faster and more reliable internet access, improving the experience for hall users, community groups and events, and supporting modern digital needs.

## Lighting

The Council successfully secured a £500 Climate Action Small Grant to support an upgrade to the Main Hall lighting. The project replaced twelve obsolete halogen strip lights with modern energy-efficient LED fittings at a total project cost of £1,010, with the remaining balance funded by the Council.

The new LED lighting significantly reduces energy consumption and carbon emissions while providing brighter, more reliable illumination for the many community groups and events that use the hall.

## Playgrounds

The boarding protecting the tennis court fencing had been in poor condition for a number of years, but replacement had previously been delayed due to the cost. During the year, the Parish Council was able to progress the project by securing a number of grants.

Funding of £1,000 was awarded from the Miller Homes Community Fund and a further £1,000 was received from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund via the Borough Council. In addition, £400 was kindly provided from County Councillor Tony Kingsbury's Locality Budget.

These contributions helped significantly towards the total project cost of £4,500, with the remaining balance funded by the Parish Council. The Council records its grateful thanks to Councillor Kingsbury for his continued support.

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Rotten timbers on the hall playground swing were replaced at a cost of £985.

# TRANSPORT

## B197 Safety Improvements



One of the most significant achievements for the Parish this year was the delivery of the long-awaited safety improvements at the London Road/Mardleybury Road junction. Work on the scheme began on Monday 14 July 2025, following many years of campaigning by residents, the Parish Council and local groups.

Efforts to reduce the speed limit on the B197 date back to 2008, when St Michael's School presented a parents' petition calling for safer roads in the village. This was followed by the publication of a Parish Plan, focused on road safety, and the formation of the B197 Action Group in 2010 to continue pressing for improvements. Road-narrowing measures were introduced in 2014, but the introduction of a 30mph speed limit was not achieved until this year.

Following community consultation in 2024 on the proposed scheme, which received majority support, the improvements were implemented. The works include a new 30mph speed limit, wider pavements and a safer signalised junction, significantly improving safety for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

At the end of September, past and present Parish Councillors, local campaigners, Head Teacher Mrs Martin, County Councillor Tony Kingsbury and members of the Highways team gathered to mark the completion of the scheme and recognise the many years of community effort that helped bring the project to fruition.

## **Puffin Crossing at Kellard House**

It is now more than four years since planning permission was granted for a puffin crossing on London Road to provide a safer crossing point between the chocolate factory and the village shops. Despite the approval, the crossing has yet to be installed.

During this time the Parish Council, with the support of our County and Borough Councillors, has continued to pursue the matter with Hertfordshire Highways and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Enforcement. The delay has also been raised by residents at the Annual Parish Meeting in recent years, reflecting ongoing community concern about the need for a safe crossing at this location.

In July, Borough Councillor Mitchinson reported that Hertfordshire Highways were reviewing how the proposed puffin crossing would fit alongside the wider Safer Routes to School road improvement scheme. An update was expected in September.

In November, it was confirmed that a meeting between Hertfordshire County Council Highways, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Enforcement and the site owner would take place on 18 November to discuss progress.

As of February, Borough Councillor Mitchinson advised that there had been no further update from Highways. He has asked County Councillor Tony Kingsbury to lend his support in progressing the issue.

The Parish Council will continue to press for the installation of this much-needed crossing.

## PLANNING

Parish Councillors attended a Miller Homes drop-in information event in September, aimed at giving residents an opportunity to learn more about the development behind the chocolate factory and car dealership and ask questions.

The development of 150 new homes, on former Green Belt land, has begun and includes environmental and drainage measures.

A landscaped woodland buffer to the north of the site will be created, along with an orchard area to help enhance the character of the development and provide green space.

Flood management has been incorporated into the plans through a surface water management scheme, including an attenuation basin designed to control water run-off and reduce flood risk. These features should support biodiversity gain by providing habitat for wildlife.

Boreholes are being drilled in the south corner of the site to support drainage and flood management.

The Parish Council engaged with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council by suggesting street names based on historical references from old maps and census records and include Great Highfield, Paynes Close, Leggats Close, Pedder Close and Cavewood Close.

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The former veterinary premises at 22A London Road, which had stood vacant for several years, has received planning permission to be converted into two residential flats through the addition of an extra storey to the existing building.

In addition, the commercial premises to the rear at 22B London Road is also being converted into a single residential dwelling. Construction work is already underway.

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### Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan Review

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's Cabinet has approved a new vision for the emerging Local Plan, which will guide development in the borough up to 2043. The draft plan focuses on three key themes: people and places, economy and infrastructure, and environment and climate, aiming to support housing and infrastructure needs while protecting the borough's character and promoting sustainability.

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The Parish Council submitted comments to nine planning applications throughout the year.



# COMMUNITY

## Wheels on Woolmer Green

Bank Holiday Monday 5th May saw a fantastic turnout for our community car show. Visitors enjoyed a display of vehicles ranging from classic cars and custom builds to hotrods and gleaming motorcycles.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of attendees, participants, and supporters, a grand total of £1,126.83 was raised in aid of Garden House Hospice Care.

## Village Day

Village Day 2025 was well attended and enjoyed favourable weather. The event included a range of stalls featuring local produce and handmade crafts, along with children's rides and games. The popular pet competition, sponsored by the Red Lion, once again attracted a good number of entrants and spectators.



## Carols round the Tree

During the Christmas period, a total of £874.96 was raised for Prostate Cancer UK, including £163.25 collected at the Carols Round the Tree event held on Christmas Eve.

A significant contribution to this total was made by the Woolmer Green Band, who supported the Christmas Eve event and raised £496.71 through performances at various Christmas engagements, along with a further £215 via their JustGiving page. In recognition of these efforts, both the Council and the band received certificates from Prostate Cancer UK.



The Christmas Eve Carols Round the Tree event was particularly notable as it marked the first time the gathering took place around the village's new permanent Christmas tree, which has been planted at the front of the Village Hall. The tree was purchased thanks to a generous donation from the The Red Lion, to whom the Council extends its thanks.

The tree, *Picea pungens* 'Oldenburg', is a slow-growing spruce that will become a lasting feature in the village, reaching an eventual height of approximately four metres and serving as the focal point for future Carols Round the Tree events.

## Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Lottery

The Council agreed that the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Community Lottery would be used as a way of raising funds towards new playground equipment for the village. Participation in the lottery provides an opportunity to generate additional funding that can be directed towards improving and enhancing local play facilities.

## Remembrance Service

On Sunday 9th November, Parish Councillors attended the Remembrance Service, paying tribute to those who served and sacrificed for our country. Parish Council Chairman Andy Gribble laid a poppy wreath at the war memorial on behalf of the community.

## Litter Pick



Grateful thanks to all the volunteers who took part in the village litter pick in November. The Parish Council greatly appreciates those who gave up their time to help keep the village looking its best with footpaths, verges and public spaces left noticeably cleaner and tidier.

## Grants

The Parish Council operates a Grant Award Policy to give financial support to local groups to help towards projects and initiatives that benefit the wider community.

£50 was donated to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal and St. Michael's Church was awarded £750 towards maintenance of the church yard.

## Staff and Volunteers

The Parish Council extends its grateful thanks to the dedicated staff who help keep the community hall clean, welcoming and well maintained. Their hard work ensures the village hall continues to run smoothly throughout the year.

A new caretaker joined the team last February and proved to be a valuable addition. However, he has recently left after one year in the role. Following advertising in the Village News candidates from the village came forward and we hope to fill the vacancy soon.

The Council is also extremely grateful to the volunteers who support the parish in a variety of ways, including running the monthly market, delivering the newsletter, carrying out playground inspections and helping to maintain the village planters. Their ongoing commitment is greatly appreciated and makes a positive difference to the community.

# STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

2024/25	Receipts:	2025/26
56,271.29	Hall Lettings	61,218.09
6,549.21	Family Centre	9,402.38
0.00	Security	180.00
3,016.50	Pitch Fees	2,074.00
385.00	Bar	0.00
1,492.50	Farmers' Market Income	1,114.50
1,810.00	Car Park	2,189.00
257.68	Clothes Bank	394.26
759.60	Allotments	784.90
1,214.24	Interest on Investments	1,017.99
1,230.00	Village Day	1,230.00
831.50	Newsletter Advertising	1,144.17
857.74	Charity Collections	1786.79
6,190.50	Other income	4,148.92
7,574.34	Reclaimed VAT	7,431.69
<b>88,440.10</b>	<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>94,116.69</b>
	<b>Payments:</b>	
53,524.70	Payroll	57,950.15
	Hall Maintenance :	
4,595.75	Insurance	4,922.78
10,722.12	Water, Gas, Electricity, Waste	10,477.97
6,758.30	License, Safety, Supplies	6,397.45
	Grounds Maintenance :	
7,792.49	Grounds	8,335.00
6,974.75	Playgrounds	6,745.00
759.60	Allotments	784.90
1,073.29	Office Expenses	2,192.25
165.00	Publicity	175.00
837.30	Audit & legal fees	866.51
945.99	HAPTC, CDA, CPRE	938.43
966.66	Grants	964.00
730.00	Newsletter	760.00
125.00	Village Day	341.57
877.76	Charity Collections	1,786.79
856.96	Other Costs	1,554.91
8,611.39	Paid VAT	7,051.59
	<b>Non Recurring Payments:</b>	
17,072.68	Hall Maintenance	7,038.14
1,300.00	Wedding License	-
105.60	Planning Consultant	-
0	Contingency	0
<b>124,795.34</b>	<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>	<b>119,282.44</b>
(36,355.24)	Income less Expenses	(25,165.75)
30,278.00	Precept	32,397.00
(6,077.24)	Surplus/Deficit	7,231.25
<b>38,127.15</b>	<b>BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD</b>	<b>32,049.91</b>
<b>32,049.91</b>	<b>TOTAL FUND</b>	<b>39,281.16</b>