



ECCLESHALL PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING 2025

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Chairmans Report 2024/25

This is my second year as Chairman of Eccleshall Parish Council. Generally, I have enjoyed my greater involvement in parish matters and would like to think that I have played a small part in helping to improve life for residents in and around Eccleshall.

Due to the current climate where people may be struggling to pay their bills and buy food etc, the Parish Council made the decision, for the coming year, to increase the precept by a very minimal amount. So, residents will only pay the equivalent of an extra 6p per household per month, of Council Tax for the Parish Council for 2025/6.

Perhaps the two events with most impact in the past year has been that the Parish Council have now partnered with Staffordshire County Council to run the library and that we are about to sign a long lease for the Beech Road play area.

The Parish Council took over the running of Eccleshall Library on 6 August 2024. The Rotary Group had run the library for the previous five years, through very difficult times. A wonderful team of volunteers was recruited and the issues with covid were well negotiated. This meant that this amenity was kept in operation for use by all the community. The Rotary Group should be applauded for their contribution to saving this important community asset. Since taking over the administration of the library the Parish Council endeavoured to allow the library to run as before, in a very efficient manner, and are now in the process of encouraging more children into the library by involving the children from Bishop Lonsdale Academy in special sessions. There are more plans for the future to encourage greater use of this very special amenity.

It has long been a desire of the Parish Council to take over the Beech Road Play Area. Plans are now well underway. Residents were initially consulted and then encouraged to attend the viewing of the proposed plans for the site and many made positive comments about the layout and range of play equipment included. It is also intended that there should be a sensory garden for all to enjoy. May I thank the very dedicated team, Parish Councillors, experts and residents, for all the hard work in deciding on equipment suitable for a wide range of young people. There will also be a refurbished 'trim trail' in Croxton. Both these projects should be completed by the summer of 2025.

This year, as a companion to the Circular Walks book and the Bench to Bench walks book, the Deputy Chairman, Chris Wilkins, has produced a Heritage Walk book that portrays a 'stroll around Eccleshall Town Centre in 1871'. This very informative book details who was living in which properties and is a fascinating look back at Eccleshall in a bygone age, and is well worth reading. All three books can be found in Eccleshall Library.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the hard working Footpath Marshals and the Keep Eccleshall Tidy Teams for all their diligence in the past year. Without these community minded people Eccleshall would be a very different place.

Eccleshall Parish Council has again been very busy ensuring that pavements have been cleared of overgrowth from verges. This is mostly due to the initial success of the 'lengthsman' scheme. Anyone who has seen the 'before' and 'after' photographs will note the huge difference to the width of pavements now achieved. The pavements within Eccleshall have also been kept clear by our Keep Eccleshall Tidy Team. I wish to thank all members of the KET Team for their constant vigilance and all they do to ensure that Eccleshall stays tidy and welcoming to both residents and visitors. I have recently handed the details of the KET Team to Councillor Chris Wilkins who will continue to be in contact with the team who have recently pledged to collect nearly 20 bags of rubbish as part of the Great British Spring Clean.

I consider that Eccleshall Parish Council works extremely hard and effectively for the community, often carrying out and organising work around the parish that is not noticed by residents. Perhaps this is how it should be. I would like to thank all our Parish Councillors for all their time, hard work and dedication to our residents. I know we are all proud to serve our community to the best of our abilities.

Ros Taylor
Chairman of Eccleshall Parish Council

March 2025

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE, 2024-25

The Planning Committee consists of all the members of the Parish Council and the quorum for a meeting is five members. The present chairman is Councillor Bryan Delanchy, and the Vice-Chairman is Councillor Stuart Perren.

Meetings of the Planning Committee are generally held every two weeks on a Wednesday. This is because applications have to be considered by the Parish Council within 21 days of receipt. This can reduce to 14 days in the case of amended plans for a previously submitted application, because of this time constraint, and as all members make up the Planning Committee decisions are not subject to the approval of the full Council.

The Parish Council considers planning applications submitted to Stafford Borough Council, which fall within the boundary of the parish. The Borough Council is the local planning authority for this area and it has no statutory obligation to consult the Parish Council on planning applications. It has, however, a policy of consulting widely on applications made to it and the Parish Council is afforded the opportunity of making its opinions known and bringing to the attention of the Borough Council, local issues of which they may not be aware. It is the duty of those on the Parish Council to raise the views and concerns of the residents of the Parish of Eccleshall, both the town and the surrounding area. As Parish Councillors, we draw on our local knowledge and our awareness of your concerns and opinions, to fulfil our obligations, not least of all with regard to planning matters.

If you have a concern about an issue or a specific planning application, please raise the matter with your local Parish Councillor who will be able to raise your concerns at the meeting when the application is discussed. Alternatively, you may attend the meeting yourself and raise your concerns during the public participation session at the start of the meeting. It must be pointed out, however, that any concerns that parishioners have with regard to a specific planning application must also be made directly to the Borough Council, as it is this body that finally determines the application. The Parish Council works closely with the Borough Councilors who represent Eccleshall. These councillors are able to “call in” applications for determination by the Development Control Sub-Committee. Otherwise, most applications are determined by the officers of the council, who interpret the requirements of the Local Plan. During 2024, the Parish Council considered 46 applications compared to 2023 when there were 61 applications.

Most applications are for small domestic extensions, agricultural buildings and barn conversions.

In July 2016 the Neighborhood Plan for Eccleshall Parish was formally adopted after successfully being approved by a referendum and became an integral part of the plan for Stafford Borough defining the residential boundary and the extent of housing. The larger defined areas for housing within this settlement boundary have now all been utilised by developers.

The plan for Stafford Borough named Eccleshall as one of 11 key service villages which would deliver 1200 houses for the 2011 to 2031 development strategy. An 'Issues and Options' document published by Stafford Borough Council in February 2020 acknowledged that Eccleshall has experienced a 23.8% increase in the number of dwellings since 2011.

Work is still ongoing within Stafford Borough Council to produce a draft of the new Local Plan for Stafford Borough, following responses received at the end of 2022 in relation to Local Plan 'Preferred Options' Consultation. This included a proposal for Meecebrook garden community, which had many implications for the surrounding area. There have been a number of changes since the latest consultation, including the cancelling of the proposed HS2 line north of Lichfield, which may have implications for the proposed transport options for Meecebrook. The Parish Council is awaiting further updates.

Councillor Bryan Delanchy.

Enhancements and Preservation Committee – Annual Report 2024/2025

Assets

This includes benches, picnic benches, bus shelters, the village sign, the clock, Croxton play area, Elford Common, Copmere Picnic Site, the Wash Pits, some kissing gates:

All these items have to be checked annually by a Councillor and the condition of them reported back to the Clerk with any remedial action that is required.

Repairs and refurbishment have been carried out to wooden seats where appropriate. A bench at the entrance to Southwell, damaged beyond economical repair by an unknown vehicle, has been replaced.

The steel bench at the junction of Stone Rd and Stafford St was showing signs of paint deterioration, and has been refurbished.

The 'round' steel seat on Stone Rd installed by the Rotary Club has been adopted by the Parish Council, and now refurbished at the same time as the above. The tree which had been growing through the centre of the seat has been removed.

The railings at the junction of Stone Rd and Castle St were damaged by an unknown HGV, and have been repaired; a claim was made via the Council's insurers.

Doug Fouling

There has been concern raised regarding the increasing problem of dog fouling on pavements, footpaths and public grassed areas. A dog waste bag dispenser has been installed at the entrance to the Community Centre car park, and if this proves successful similar dispensers could be introduced elsewhere.

Croxton Play Area

It has been established that part of best practice is to increase the number of official checks that are implemented on this equipment. These checks have duly been carried out, recommendations made and remedial repair work completed, including the log walk. A quote was recently accepted for replacement of the existing Trim Trail, as this has deteriorated over recent years. It will be more economical in the long term to replace with a new installation rather than continue to repair each time an issue is identified and we hope this can be completed prior to the Well Dressing Festival in June.

Contracts and outsourced work

The Lengthsman scheme has been working well, and various tasks completed, including kerb clearance, verge clearance on Stafford Rd between Sancerre and Blurtons Lane, and general tidying of excess vegetation around the Parish as required. Work is also in the diary for tidying around Croxton and a clean of the play area, in preparation for the Well Dressing in June 2025

Additional grass removal and light hedge trimming was carried out by the Lengthsman late summer out on Newport Rd between Cross Butts and Wincote Lane.

Elford Common

As reported previously, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust had approached us with a scheme to introduce 2 small ponds which should increase the wildlife and biodiversity, particularly to encourage Great Crested Newts. This was put on hold by the Wildlife Trust pending available funding, and we are awaiting an update.

Telephone Boxes

The Washpits box was used over the Christmas period by Eccleshall Scouts for a Christmas display, and the Parish Council is still welcoming ideas for a permanent function for it. A quote has been approved for this box to be repainted, which will take place Spring/Summer 2025.

Biodiversity

There is a duty of care by Parish Councils to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The Climate Change working group will be extended to encompass this, and will be holding meetings to process this further, hopefully in conjunction with other organisations within the Parish. One aim is to promote the growth of flowering plants and encourage bees and other pollinators.

Beech Road Community Park

Following protracted proposals and suggestions in recent years, the future of the current semi derelict 'Play Park' on Beech Rd has been decided, and in what must be one of the most ambitious and exciting projects in recent years for the Parish Council, a new Community Park is coming to fruition.

Early in 2024, discussions commenced with Stafford Borough Council over leasing of the area, and the funding via a 'S106' grant.

A working group was formed comprising Parish Council members and local residents. A public survey was carried out in the area around Beech Rd, and as a consequence plans evolved on how the park should be used and appropriate equipment provided, which would appeal to varying ages and abilities.

Tenders were obtained from leading suppliers, and an agreement was made with Kompan to totally redevelop the existing site, including removal of the outdated and worn out play equipment.

It is anticipated that once the imminent legal and funding formalities are complete, work will start late Spring with an opening planned for Summer 2025.

Report compiled by Councillor Stuart Perren, Chairman.

Events Committee Annual Report 2024-25

The Events committee is involved with the National VE Day Memorial event which takes place on Thursday 8th May 2025 with a Beacon Lighting at the Community Centre with entertainment and in keeping with a national Fish and Chip supper.

The committee is currently considering what activities it may look to plan over the next twelve months. Consideration is also being given to future participation in events such as the Eccleshall Show, attending as an exhibitor in order to raise the profile of the parish council and its work.

It may be that the committee considers the activities of other organisations in the parish who already have regular events which the committee could support in one way or another.

The Annual Community Showcase is due to be held this year, with a date to be confirmed. Invitations will be extended to local groups and societies in due course, to come and showcase all that is on offer in Eccleshall. Past such events have proven popular with members of the community and members of the various organisations who have taken part.

Eccleshall has a great many clubs, organisations and businesses which stage various events in the parish and the committee would be pleased to support them in any way possible.

The events during the festive period are a case in point when the Christmad trees are decorated, provided and erected by various groups with support from the Parish Council.

Councillor Peter Jones

FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE REPORT – 2024/2025

The Footpaths Committee have, as always, been working hard in the past year and I am most grateful to the members of the Committee for their continued commitment.

During the year our Footpath Marshals have been as vigilant as usual and reported issues on our paths, especially those paths that form part of any of the Circular Walks. Without such community minded people Eccleshall would be a very different place. The Footpaths Maintenance Operative, Graham, will almost always remedy the issue within days of being informed. The system works very well indeed. Obviously, there is a limited budget for this work so sometimes work needs to be prioritised.

This year, as a companion to the Circular Walks book and the Bench to Bench walks book, the Deputy Chairman, Chris Wilkins, has produced a Heritage Walk book that portrays a 'stroll around Eccleshall Town Centre in 1871'. This very informative book details who was living in which properties and is a fascinating look back at Eccleshall in a bygone age, and is well worth reading. All three books can be found in Eccleshall Library.

I wish to thank all members of the KET Team for their constant vigilance and all they do to ensure that Eccleshall stays tidy and welcoming to both residents and visitors. I have recently handed the details of the KET Team to Councillor Chris Wilkins who will continue to be in contact with the team who have recently pledged to collect nearly 20 bags of rubbish as part of the Great British Spring Clean.

The sign posts are now in place at Bishops Wood as are the information noticeboards giving historical facts about the area and what matters of interest can be found in the woods i.e. bats and red ants.

May I offer my sincere thanks to all our Footpath Marshals and Litter Pickers for their constant vigilance and hard work. Eccleshall and its surrounds is a much better place for us all to live thanks to such valued volunteers.

Ros Taylor
Chairman of the Footpaths Committee

March 2025

Traffic Management Committee – Annual Report 2024-2025

The popularity of Eccleshall as a place to live, shop and as a tourist destination creates its own problems.

The Parish Council's Traffic Management Committee has been one of the major committees for many years looking into the overall safety of residents and visitors to the parish and working with the County Council's Highways Department regarding the condition of the roads, pavements and parking.

Like most towns, the condition of the roads is high on the list of concerns for residents and visitors alike. The parish council encourages residents to use the 'Report it' system on the Staffordshire County Council website as well as using itself to ensure damage to roads is regularly reported.

Eccleshall historical sites and local businesses are a huge draw to visitors causing a shortage of parking places in the town centre. The parish council continues its search into looking into possible parking sites and solutions.

Over the years surveys of the limited parking places and who uses them have revealed the various patterns followed by parkers.

It would appear that some traders in the town centre seem to use on-street parking which could be used for shoppers and visitors.

A short walk can often be the answer in finding a parking place, although not in front of the venue of your choice. Some days are less popular than others for parking in the centre, leaving on-street parking places available.

With Eccleshall being a popular place for more new homes, spaces for parking are in short supply. More and more homes are having EV points at their homes but public use points are still not available.

The Co-op supermarket provides a limited number of disabled parking places on its car park which is useful when shopping at the Co-op, but requires a walk for other business destinations. The Co-op also provides limited free parking and metred parking.

Whether additional disabled car parking place(s) are required, and the best location, is a subject of continued consideration.

Councillor Peter Jones
Chairman of Traffic Committee

Policy and Resources Committee - Annual Report 2024/2025

The committee is traditionally chaired by the chairman of the full council and this year this is Councillor Ros Taylor.

The committee meets on all matters financial and policy and makes recommendations to the full council on those matters. Main tasks include:

- Budget proposals and precept requirements
- Consideration of new policies and amendments
- Review of Deeds and insurances
- Updates to the Forward plan
- Grant applications
- Monitoring of any investments

Throughout the year the P&R committee receives budget updates, ensuring planned expenditure is on track. Staffing updates are also provided to the committee as required.

Applications for grants come first to the Policy and Resources Committee and are considered against the available funding that is specifically allocated for this purpose. The council considers grants to organisations within the parish of Eccleshall or ones that provide a service for the Eccleshall community. Sometimes the grant is minimal and other times larger depending on the application needs and the remaining budget allocation. This financial year, grants were given to:

- Eccleshall Festival
- Eccleshall First Responders (towards a replacement defibrillator)
- Croxton Well Dressing
- Eccleshall Community Amateur Dramatics
- Eccleshall Indoor Bowls
- Katharine House Hospice

Councillor Ros Taylor, March 2025

Eccleshall Parish Council Financial Summary – March 2025.

Budget Summary as of 28th February 2025

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Summary Receipts & Payments by Budget Heading 28/02/2025							
Cost Centre Report							
		Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent
100 Administration	Receipts	104,350	90,033	(14,317)			115.9%
	Payments	44,889	54,935	10,046		10,046	81.7%
	Net Receipts over Payments	<u>59,461</u>	<u>35,098</u>	<u>(24,363)</u>			
	plus Transfer from EMR	0	0	0			
	less Transfer to EMR	3,733	0	(3,733)			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>51,995</u>	<u>35,098</u>	<u>(20,630)</u>			
110 Open Spaces	Payments	29,487	35,533	6,046		6,046	83.0%
	plus Transfer from EMR	4,258	0	(4,258)			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(25,230)</u>	<u>(35,533)</u>	<u>(10,303)</u>			
120 Projects	Payments	7,946	16,600	8,654		8,654	47.9%
	plus Transfer from EMR	190	0	(190)			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(7,756)</u>	<u>(16,600)</u>	<u>(8,844)</u>			
130 Traffic Management	Payments	2,408	2,585	177		177	93.2%
	plus Transfer from EMR	0	0	0			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(2,408)</u>	<u>(2,585)</u>	<u>(177)</u>			
140 Highways Maintenance	Payments	0	2,000	2,000		2,000	0.0%
	plus Transfer from EMR	0	0	0			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>0</u>	<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>(2,000)</u>			
150 Events	Payments	347	4,000	3,653		3,653	8.7%
160 Village Halls	Payments	1,105	1,105	0		0	100.0%
180 Planning	Payments	0	6,000	6,000		6,000	0.0%
190 Library	Payments	2,628	5,000	2,372		2,372	52.6%
199 Contingencies	Payments	0	500	500		500	0.0%
	plus Transfer from EMR	0	0	0			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>0</u>	<u>(500)</u>	<u>(500)</u>			
999 VAT Data	Receipts	5,252	0	(5,252)			0.0%
	Payments	4,646	0	(4,646)		(4,646)	0.0%
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>606</u>					
Grand Totals:- Receipts		<u>109,601</u>	<u>90,033</u>	<u>(19,568)</u>			121.7%
Payments		<u>93,455</u>	<u>128,258</u>	<u>34,803</u>	0	34,803	72.9%
Net Receipts over Payments		<u>16,147</u>	<u>(38,225)</u>	<u>(54,372)</u>			
plus Transfer from EMR		4,448	0	(4,448)			
less Transfer to EMR		3,733	0	(3,733)			
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve		<u>16,861</u>	<u>(38,225)</u>	<u>(55,086)</u>			

Bank Reconciliation as of 28th February 2025

Eccleshall Parish Council

Bank - Cash and Investment Reconciliation as at 28 February 2025

Confirmed Bank & Investment Balances			
<u>Bank Statement Balances</u>			
28/02/2025	Public Sector Deposit Fund		28,213.71
28/02/2025	Unity Current		3,373.43
28/02/2025	Unity Deposit		87,664.06
28/02/2025			20.00
28/02/2025			50.00
			119,321.20
<u>Receipts not on Bank Statement</u>			
			0.00
Closing Balance			119,321.20

Earmarked Reserves

These are ringfenced funds identified in addition to the annual budget, needed for activities that:

- May stretch over a longer period than the 12 month budget plan (e.g. longer term projects and funding that is allocated over a number of years)
- Allow for a planned build-up of reserves over a number of years for future expenditure (e.g. 4 yearly elections expenses)
- Form part of the financial planning for ongoing maintenance of assets and covers expenditure that may be unplanned (e.g. additional maintenance of open spaces, repairs/replacements of play equipment).

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Eccleshall Parish Council Earmarked Reserves

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Account	Opening Balance	Net Transfers	Closing Balance
315 EMR - Concurrent Allowance	0.00	0.50	0.50
320 EMR - Clock Maintenance	1,100.00	-190.00	910.00
321 EMR - Community Centre	10,000.00		10,000.00
322 EMR - Croxton Play Area	757.79	-757.79	0.00
323 EMR - Traffic Calming	494.74		494.74
324 EMR - Highways/ex CC Duties	4,589.58		4,589.58
326 EMR - Training	3,605.25	-3,605.25	0.00
327 EMR - Allotments	2,344.14	-1,344.14	1,000.00
329 EMR - Eagle Street Art	9,618.00	-9,618.00	0.00
330 EMR - IT	2,169.96	-669.96	1,500.00
331 EMR - Elford Heath Management	5,846.78	-5,846.78	0.00
332 EMR - Flood Works	405.00		405.00
333 EMR - Copmere Picnic Site	1,260.00	-1,260.00	0.00
335 EMR - Beech Road	9,000.00	-3,000.00	6,000.00
336 EMR - Neighbourhood Plan	6,000.00		6,000.00
337 EMR - Open Spaces	0.00	5,475.00	5,475.00
	57,191.24	-20,816.42	36,374.82