



# **ECCLESHALL PARISH COUNCIL**

## **ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING 2026**

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

## Chairmans Annual Report 2025/2026

This is my third year as Chairman of Eccleshall Parish Council. Generally, I have enjoyed my continued 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.

The Parish Council made the decision, for the coming year, to increase the precept by 15.9% for 2026/7. However, this amount is only equivalent to just 49p per household per month, or £5.91 per year – less than a pint of beer!

The Parish Council took over the running of Eccleshall Library on 6 August 2024. During the past 19 months or so the Library Management Team, made up of myself as Chairman, Deputy Parish Chairman, Chris Wilkins and the Parish Clerk, Mrs Stacey Worden, three library volunteers and the County Council Support Officer, have endeavoured to update all data protection and health, safety requirements, ensure that all library volunteers are DBS checked and put on various events to encourage use of the library by all ages of the community. The children from Bishops Lonsdale Academy are, again all coming to spend time in the library in class groups, the Community Lounge and Monthly Interest talks, cater for our older residents, there have been reading challenges for all age groups, children's activities during half term week, we are in consultation with the NHS to put on an evening showing residents how they can be helped, and the Literary Festival last September had visiting authors covering six different genres, plus many other activities. All have resulted in greater footfall in our library.

It has long been a desire of the Parish Council to take over the Beech Road Play Area and I was delighted that this play area was officially opened by the Mayor of Stafford, Mrs Jenny Barron, in August 2025. The area has wonderful play equipment suitable for many ages of children. It is also intended that there will be a sensory garden for all to enjoy, and plans are underway for this garden to be planted with appropriate flowers and shrubs. The 'trim trail' in Croxton has also been completed for all to enjoy.

The Parish Council presented 'Freedom of the Parish' awards to four of our most worthy residents. At the presentation on 27 August 2025, Jon Ball was thanked for almost single handedly managing the Eccleshall Library from 2019 to 2024, for recruiting the wonderful volunteers and keeping the library functioning during the difficult covid period. It was obvious that he was

delighted with the award and the presentation event that more than 40 people attended. Sadly, Jon died 8 days later.

Presentations were also made at Holy Trinity Church on the 12 October 2025 to John Baldry, who Chaired the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme from 2009 to 2025 and ran the Speedwatch scheme. He was in regular touch with the local police and kept residents informed of any unusual events or issues. To John Araklitis for serving fish and chips to the residents of Eccleshall for over 45 years, giving work opportunities to young people and supporting local events, an amazing achievement. Also, to Gill Bertram, a founding member of the Ecclesian Society who ensured that all new residents were given a welcome pack. Gill also regularly opens her beautiful garden as part of the Eccleshall Open Gardens weekend as well as being part of the National Garden Scheme. Each was given a beautiful certificate to hang on the wall, and all the recipients of these awards have been given a badge to wear with pride when they are out and about in Eccleshall.

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.

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.

I also wish to thank our Parish Clerk, Mrs Stacey Worden, who often goes above and beyond what is expected to ensure that, we, the Parish Councillors can work as efficiently and effectively as possible. Without her diligence and knowledge, the Parish Council would not run as smoothly as it does. We are fortunate to have such a hard working Clerk.

Ros Taylor

Chairman of Eccleshall Parish Council

March 2026

## Planning Committee – Annual Report, 2025/26

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 Councillors 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 2025, the Parish Council considered 56 applications compared to 2024 when there were 46 applications.

The combined local plan and Neighbourhood Plan were written at a time when the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supported considered applications and respected the boundaries which had been set around settlements, where space was allocated for reasonable growth and unsuitable applications could be refused.

Unfortunately new government priorities have led to National Planning Policy changes, meaning the presumption in favor of sustainable development in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) now guides planning decisions in the UK. This means that planning permission should generally be granted unless the adverse impacts of a proposal significantly outweigh the benefits, or specific policies provide a clear reason for refusal. This, and the huge increase in the allotted housing supply needed by planning authorities has meant that Eccleshall (and many other areas) have received planning applications which are all outside of the Neighbourhood Plan settlement boundary and do not form part of the current Borough Council Local Plan. The Parish Council has professionally sought to combat and make considered objections with the support of an external Planning Consultant, which can be considered relevant in planning to ward against these received.

Councillor Bryan Delanchy.

# Enhancements and Preservation Committee – Annual Report 2025/2026

## 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.

This operation was completed by August, repairs and refurbishment have subsequently been carried out as appropriate.

## Croxton Play Area

Regular checks continue on the play area, and as a consequence it was noted that the 'Trim Trail' required replacement. This was carried out in the Spring, in time for the village Well Dressing in June. Further maintenance takes place as required following inspections.

## Contracts and outsourced work

The Lengthsman scheme continues to work very well, and their tasks have included maintenance on Jubilee Fields, general tidying in Croxton prior to well Dressing, and a major clearance of undergrowth that had obstructed the pavement between Washpits and Kerry Lane in the Autumn. Remaining outsourced work is carried out on assets as commented above.

## Elford Common

Unfortunately, the Newt Pool Project has been discontinued and is unlikely to be reinstated in the near future. A tree condition survey has recently been authorised with particular emphasis on safety, and the report is awaited.

## Telephone Boxes

The Washpits box was refurbished and is looking very tidy. The Save Eccleshall campaign put it to good use during Summer and Autumn, and once again it was decorated by Eccleshall Scouts for a Christmas display. The Parish Council would welcome ideas for a permanent function for it.

## Tree Planting

The Staffordshire Parish Councils Association had made an offer to supply Sakura Japanese Cherry Trees. Eccleshall PC agreed to receive one, and in fact received two! The trees have been planted on the Jubilee Field with grateful assistance from members of the Eccleshall Allotment Association. Thanks are

also expressed to Ken Langford, who also helped with the planting and created the borders for each tree.

The Columnar Cherry Tree on Stone Road near The Burgage had died and will be replaced during Spring 2026.

## Biodiversity

Following on from last year's initiative a Working Group has been reformed and a Biodiversity strategy established with an initial emphasis on 'Bee Friendly' projects which first involved the planting of bluebells in the area of the toilets. Having gained approval from SBC, the Eccleshall Scouts carried this out in November planting 500 bulbs and were rewarded with confectionary and food by Perrys.

As an extension of the 'Bee Friendly' initiative, a voucher scheme is underway, sponsored by the Parish Council and the Ecclesian Society to provide Lavender plants for home planting to the value of £5 available from Fletcher's Garden Centre and P & M Edwards (Johnson Hall Nursery).

Another initiative planned is to encourage butterflies by householders planting suitable 'food' for caterpillars.

Information on local areas of biological interest has been provided by David Cadman, of Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. Discussions at meetings have resulted in proposals to situate a Swift box at the church; this is subject to approval by the Lichfield Diocese. Interest has also been expressed in other bird and bat boxes for other locations including Croxton Millenium Wood, Elford Heath, Eccleshall Community Centre and Copmere Picnic Site.

## Beech Road Community Park

This has been a major 'jewel in the crown' for Eccleshall!

After many months of negotiations and legal discussions with Stafford Borough Council, the lease arrangements were finalised and the Parish Council were able to instruct Kompan to proceed with the work to carry out ground works and install the equipment. Works were completed in time for the school holidays, and a very well attended opening event took place in glorious weather on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2025 with a tape cutting by the Mayor of Stafford Borough Cllr Jenny Barron. Apart from some minor issues that have since been resolved, it is proving a very successful asset and providing pleasure for the children of Eccleshall.

Report compiled by Councillor Stuart Perren, Chairman.

## Events Committee- Annual Report 2025/26

The Events committee was formed to engage with local events and activities, as well as delivering events to mark nationally celebrated events, which in past years has included Jubilee and Coronation events which were very successful. Last year's highlight was our VE Day celebration evening.

### **VE Day 80th Anniversary Celebration – 8th May 2025**

Eccleshall came together for a truly memorable and fitting evening on 8th May 2025, as the Parish Council hosted a sold-out celebration marking the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

The event, held at Eccleshall Community Centre, welcomed guests from 6.45pm through to 9.45pm. The hall was filled to capacity, reflecting the strong community spirit that continues to define Eccleshall and the importance of commemorating such a significant moment in our nation's history.

The evening featured wartime-themed musical melodies performed live by Linda Mae, creating a wonderfully nostalgic atmosphere and encouraging an enthusiastic singalong. Attendees also took part in a themed VE Day quiz, testing their knowledge of wartime history and 1940s culture, with prizes awarded to the highest scorers.

Each ticket included a traditional fish and chip supper, which proved extremely popular, and guests were invited to bring their own drinks and nibbles to enjoy at their tables. The combination of good food, music and shared remembrance created a warm and convivial setting throughout the evening.

The highlight of the event came at 9.30pm with a poignant Beacon Lighting Ceremony. Eccleshall joined communities across the country in a "Shared Moment of Celebration," marking the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe. The beacon was lit by Simon McKnight, a former member of the Armed Services and a longstanding, active member of the local branch of the Royal British Legion. His involvement brought particular significance and dignity to the occasion.

In addition to this commemorative event, members of the Events Committee were also pleased to represent the Parish Council at the annual Christmas Tree Festival. A tree was decorated with handmade ornaments thoughtfully created to represent Eccleshall, its heritage, and the strong sense of community that we are proud to

share. The display was very well received and once again demonstrated the creativity and dedication of those involved.

These events are wonderful examples of our community coming together — whether in remembrance, celebration, or festive spirit. My sincere thanks go to the Events Committee for their organisation and hard work, to our volunteers who supported these occasions, and to everyone who attended and contributed to their success.

The Annual Community Showcase is due to be held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2026, at Holy Trinity Church, with invitations to go out shortly.

It has been a year marked by community pride and participation, and I look forward to building on this momentum in the year ahead.

Councillor Dan Feneysel, Events Committee Chairman.

## Footpaths Committee - Annual Report 2025/2026

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. 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.

The Parish Council walks booklets continue to be popular; these are the Bench to Bench walks book, the Circular Walks booklet and the most recent, Heritage Walk book that portrays a 'stroll around Eccleshall Town Centre in 1871'. This fascinating booklet may be of particular interest to those people who wish to know more about the history of Eccleshall, a town that has been on the map since the twelfth century. The book details who were living in which properties in Eccleshall in 1871, as well as history of the various properties in the town. The threefold walks leaflets are also still popular. All these booklets and leaflets 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.

I also 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. The KET Team is now organised by Councillor Chris Wilkins who will continue to be in contact with the team.

Ros Taylor

Chairman of the Footpaths Committee

March 2026

## Policy and Resources Committee - Annual Report 2025/2026

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.

For the upcoming year 2026-27, the budget has been set at £131,493. There has been a number of increases over the year, including increased insurance costs, potential election costs that require gradual accrual of funds. Unplanned expenditure of up to £10,000 has been allocated to ensuring robust and professional responses to large planning applications to defend against excessive speculative large scale housing development. Government grant funding has been withdrawn for the upcoming Neighbourhood Plan Review, which is essential for alignment with the emerging Local Plan, so this must now be met in full by council funds.

The Council has endeavoured to keep the impact on the precept as low as possible, but to cover these costs and maintain essential services, the 2026-27 precept had to be increased, from £84,200 in 25/26 to £98,000 for the coming year. Whilst equivalent to a 15.9% increase, in monetary terms this equates to an increase of just £5.91 per year, or 49p per month for a Band D household - less than the cost of a second class stamp per month.

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 First Responders - £2,000 towards the replacement response vehicle
- Eccleshall Rugby Club - £750 towards the refurbishment of the changing facilities
- Katharine House Hospice

Councillor Ros Taylor, March 2026

## Highways & Transport Committee Annual Report 2025/ 2026

Eccleshall continues to prove to be a popular place to live with the increased number of planning applications for new homes in the form of housing estates in the parish. Our historic town has always proved a draw as a tourist destination and as a shopping destination the need for more and more parking causes its own problems.

The Parish Council's Highways and Transport Committee work with the County Council's Highways Department looking into the overall safety of residents and visitors to the parish regarding the condition of the roads, pavements and parking.

The parishes own safety cameras are located at prime sites monitor the speed of traffic and provide data on the speed of vehicles using the roads in the parish. The cameras' locations are rotated regularly and flash to indicate to motorists that their speed has been recorded.

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, which the council also uses to ensure damage to roads is regularly reported.

Over the years the Council's own surveys have shown that some traders use the on-street parking themselves which could be used by customers and visitors. Surveys have also shown that some days are less popular than others for parking in the centre, leaving on-street parking places available.

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.

A short walk can often be the answer in finding a parking place, although not in front of the venue of your choice.

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.

Eccleshall as always is a victim of its own popularity.

**Councillor Peter Jones**

**Chairman of Highways and Transport Committee**

# Eccleshall Parish Council Financial Summary – March 2026.

## Budget Summary as of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2026

03/03/2026

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### Summary Receipts & Payments by Budget Heading 28/02/2026

#### Cost Centre Report

		Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent
100 Administration	Receipts	195,933	93,733	(102,200)			209.0%
	Payments	54,288	59,445	5,157		5,157	91.3%
	Net Receipts over Payments	<u>141,644</u>	<u>34,288</u>	<u>(107,356)</u>			
	plus Transfer from EMR	1,500	0	(1,500)			
	less Transfer to EMR	3,733	0	(3,733)			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>135,678</u>	<u>34,288</u>	<u>(105,123)</u>			
110 Open Spaces	Payments	31,905	42,933	11,028		11,028	74.3%
	plus Transfer from EMR	4,764	0	(4,764)			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(27,142)</u>	<u>(42,933)</u>	<u>(15,791)</u>			
120 Projects	Payments	103,386	11,000	(92,386)		(92,386)	939.9%
	plus Transfer from EMR	9,000	0	(9,000)			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(94,386)</u>	<u>(11,000)</u>	<u>83,386</u>			
130 Highways and Transport	Payments	5,734	3,600	(2,134)		(2,134)	159.3%
	plus Transfer from EMR	90	0	(90)			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(5,644)</u>	<u>(3,600)</u>	<u>2,044</u>			
140 Highways Maintenance	Payments	650	2,000	1,350		1,350	32.5%
	plus Transfer from EMR	0	0	0			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(650)</u>	<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>(1,350)</u>			
150 Events	Payments	4,971	3,000	(1,971)		(1,971)	165.7%
160 Village Halls	Payments	1,105	1,105	0		0	100.0%
180 Planning	Payments	4,335	2,500	(1,835)		(1,835)	173.4%
	plus Transfer from EMR	1,835	0	(1,835)			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(2,500)</u>	<u>(2,500)</u>	<u>0</u>			
190 Library	Payments	4,457	4,800	343		343	92.9%
	plus Transfer from EMR	1,389	0	(1,389)			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(3,068)</u>	<u>(4,800)</u>	<u>(1,732)</u>			
199 Contingencies	Payments	1,737	500	(1,237)		(1,237)	347.4%
	plus Transfer from EMR	1,500	0	(1,500)			
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(237)</u>	<u>(500)</u>	<u>(263)</u>			
999 VAT Data	Receipts	27,061	0	(27,061)			0.0%
	Payments	27,380	0	(27,380)		(27,380)	0.0%
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(319)</u>					

Summary Receipts & Payments by Budget Heading 28/02/2026

Cost Centre Report

	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent
Grand Totals:- Receipts	222,993	93,733	(129,260)			237.9%
Payments	239,948	130,883	(109,065)	0	(109,065)	183.3%
Net Receipts over Payments	<u>(16,954)</u>	<u>(37,150)</u>	<u>(20,196)</u>			
plus Transfer from EMR	20,077	0	(20,077)			
less Transfer to EMR	3,733	0	(3,733)			
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(610)</u>	<u>(37,150)</u>	<u>(36,540)</u>			

[Bank Reconciliation as of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2026](#)

Eccleshall Parish Council

Bank - Cash and Investment Reconciliation as at 28 February 2026

<b>Confirmed Bank &amp; Investment Balances</b>		
<u>Bank Statement Balances</u>		
31/01/2026	Public Sector Deposit Fund	29,320.66
31/01/2026	Unity Current	2,391.47
31/01/2026	Unity Deposit	72,988.46
31/01/2026		20.00
31/01/2026		50.00
		<b>104,770.59</b>
<u>Receipts not on Bank Statement</u>		
		<b>0.00</b>
<b>Closing Balance</b>		<b>104,770.59</b>

## 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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03/03/2026

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**Earmarked Reserves**

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<u>Account</u>	<u>Opening Balance</u>	<u>Net Transfers</u>	<u>Closing Balance</u>
315 EMR - Concurrent Allowance	0.50	-0.50	0.00
320 EMR - Clock Maintenance	910.00		910.00
321 EMR - Community Centre	10,000.00	-1,500.00	8,500.00
323 EMR - Traffic Calming	494.74	-89.99	404.75
324 EMR - Highways/ex CC Duties	4,589.58		4,589.58
327 EMR - Allotments	1,575.00		1,575.00
328 EMR - Elections	1,500.00		1,500.00
330 EMR - IT	1,500.00		1,500.00
332 EMR - Flood Works	405.00		405.00
335 EMR - Beech Road	9,000.00	-9,000.00	0.00
336 EMR - Neighbourhood Plan	12,000.00	-3,335.00	8,665.00
337 EMR - Open Spaces	7,075.00	-1,030.00	6,045.00
338 EMR - Library	3,440.00	-1,389.00	2,051.00
	<b><u>52,489.82</u></b>	<b><u>-16,344.49</u></b>	<b><u>36,145.33</u></b>