



Chair's annual report - May 2026

So much of what the parish council does is not done in isolation, but in collaboration with other village groups and individuals, so this is as much a summary of their work as ours.

Finances



We managed again to keep our precept impressively low at 1.9% increase. Our previous years have seen increases of 0% and 1.89%. We're especially pleased to be able to do this, after careful financial planning, as the national average is 5%. We know that times are tough, and in this small way we are able to provide a good level of care without overly burdening the parishioners.

The parish council's finances are in good shape, and you can read up on it at <https://datchworth-pc.gov.uk> > Meetings > 2026 > Annual parish meeting > Appendices

Car Park



As many have observed, this has been a long, drawn-out process, hindered by red tape and by new costs introduced by HCC Highways Department, but now - finally - the project is nearing its conclusion. The long-awaited dropped kerb has passed its planning stages and will be completed imminently. More off-road parking near the crossroads will, we hope, encourage customers to the village shop, the Plough and Dolly's of Datchworth coffee shop, and enable them to park safely.

The planting scheme, undertaken by volunteers, will make the car park environmentally attractive and will support biodiversity. We're installing an EV charging point (with an option for another) and cycle racks to make it greener.

We are indebted to our generous benefactors who have enabled this to happen with minimal impact on the public purse, and to Tony Charles, long-term stalwart of the village, who has worked tirelessly to project manage the car park build. We look forward to a clearer, safer crossroads.

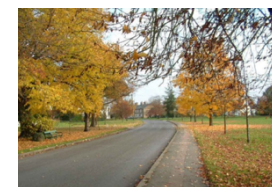


Parks and Recreation Areas

Leisure plots; we have secured a grant from EHDC for £850, which has been spent on fencing, gates and planting. With the work carried out by local volunteers under the leadership of Cllr Charlie Groves, a 'corridor' of two parallel fence lines now surrounds the leisure plots, keeping unwanted visitors (mostly in the form of rabbits) out, but easy access in for plot holders via four new gates. The new planting in the corridor aims to naturalise it and encourage wildlife.

We've undertaken improvements to the play areas around the village, especially in Nutcroft, and play equipment has been renovated/repared where necessary. We've also renewed the car park surface in the Turkey Farm.

We've set aside areas for wildflowers to grow in Nutcroft and the orchard in the Turkey Farm, and for the WI to plant some tête-à-tête daffodils on the green, which we'll enjoy next spring.



Business, as usual

Much of what a parish council does is routine;

- organising playground inspections and ensuring the maintenance jobs get done
- grass cutting and tree maintenance
- registering land, where appropriate
- responding to planning applications which affect the village
- reviewing and commenting on bigger developments in the area such as the Knebworth housing project
- maintaining equipment, such as the defibrillators, benches and bins

We work with Welwyn Parish Council to form the Burnham Green Joint Management Committee, specifically to meet the needs of that part of the parish which sits within both council areas.

Traffic calming is a concern for many, and we're keen to continue working with the residents and the local authority and Highways to find solutions to the ongoing problem of increased and speeding traffic.

There's also the business-as-usual tasks such as managing the budget and dealing with public queries and requests. If you'd like to know more about how we work, please come along to a parish council meeting (last Tuesday of the month except August and December, 7pm, at the church hall).

Community Engagement



Our two sessions 'Strength and Balance' (Mondays, 1pm-2pm), and Tai Chi (Tuesdays 9:30am-10:30am), both running every week in the village hall are free to users, well attended, encourage people to lead fit, healthy lives and seem to be very well appreciated. Do come along and see for yourself that they're friendly and good for your body and mind.

We organised the Christmas Tree Lights Event, working alongside the church to provide carols, a brass band and mulled wine or soft drinks for all.

We get loosely involved in projects with other groups and clubs, such as:

- Sponsoring the minibus for Datchworth Open Gardens
- Working with local volunteers, led by Delith Wringe, to ensure the planters around the village are always looking lovely
- Volunteering our time at events like the weekly Digital Inclusion sessions which run at the village hall, Tuesdays, 1pm-3pm. They are very successful and help many people understand the intricacies of digital devices
- Supporting the annual McMillan coffee morning
- Organising a talk about Lasting Powers of Attorney and keeping your home warm
- Ensuring the Climate Change stall is able to offer its wares and build environmental awareness on the green each month

We've worked with other organisations - the sports club, the church, all three hall committees, Open Gardens, the parish magazine, the fête and festival committees, pubs and other local businesses - to support and encourage community cohesion.

We're always keen to help, so if you have any ideas for us to get involved, please do let us know.

Thank You's



We are very lucky to have three great colleagues; Andy Short, our enthusiastic and conscientious clerk; Wendy Prowle, our hard-working and knowledgeable Responsible Financial Officer; and Nick Kleanthous, our cheerful and diligent Community Ranger. Thank you, all.

A big thank you to my fellow councillors - at parish, district, and county levels - for everything they do as dedicated volunteers working to improve our parish.

Finally, I'd like to express my gratitude to the many residents who, as always, demonstrate the strength of our wonderful community in Datchworth and Burnham Green through their volunteering, support and hard work to help us and others.

Sara Miller
Chair
19th May 2026

