

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT & SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS 2022/3

We have had regular monthly meetings in the village hall with less additional planning meetings required this year. It seems ages ago when we all had to learn to operate Zoom, but it has been good to get back to normal.

The dedicated website is still being expanded to improve communications. Remember if the council are made aware of issues it can investigate and action if required. It is better to be told twice than not at all, so don't assume we are aware of issues.

Unfortunately, the first grant application for the play park update was not successful, so we will be exploring our options. The consultation and involvement of villagers went very well so we know what you want.

Some further tree work was required to maintain the safety within the play park and make room for the planned new equipment. One additional tree was planted near the entrance to the recreation ground and further trees are planned to be planted along the High Street later in the year. The newer trees required regular watering during the dry summer but have hopefully survived ok and we will start to see some greenery soon.

Unfortunately, the problem of anti-social driving at the Elean Business Park returned over the Xmas period and periodically since then. The authorities are aware and police have issued warning letters to some of the offenders.

The data collected from the mobile vehicle activated sign shows that approximately 20% of vehicles are speeding through the village, some up to 60mph! A monthly summary of data collected for each passing vehicle is forwarded to the speed watch coordinator and could assist in planning targeted campaigns to enforce the limit if enough volunteers come forward to help.

Witcham cricket club had insufficient players to be able to field a regular side last year and again this year, but it was good to see them in action in a few mid-week cup games. Ely third team made use of the facilities last year and will again this year, so there will be some Saturday entertainment again this year.

The Village Hall Committee are planning the 50th anniversary pea shoot which had to be postponed and we all look forward to it.

The possible loss of the "dog walking" fields focussed attention on future planning requirements of the village and it was decided to explore if there would be support in drafting a neighbourhood plan. Initial meetings were well attended and Witcham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group was set up. The group meets regularly and will be drafting a questionnaire to get your feedback please.

Special thanks to Eleanor who has resurrected the "What's On" in a new format. Remember to let her know of any items that you would like included.

Also, thanks to Ruth who organised another litter pick which again resulted in less collectable rubbish than normal. This is hopefully a result of people disposing of the rubbish responsibly but is also due to a dedicated few who continue to pick it up whilst out on walks throughout the village.

Please do not hesitate to contact any of us with any comments or ideas you may have for improving the village.

Thanks to everyone for maintaining the community spirit and for making Witcham an enviable place to live.

A special thanks to my fellow councillors, County Councillor (Lorna Dupre), District Councillor (Mark Inskip) and particularly Sue Bell our hardworking Parish Clerk who filters and summarises the mountain of correspondences received.

M Housden

Chairman Witcham Parish Council

TRAFFIC SPEED MONITORING

The mobile vehicle activated camera is periodically moved between the current five locations. Unfortunately, additional positions in both High Street and Silver Street are not possible due to the streetlamp designs.

Data has been collected for just under two years. The highest speeds and highest average speeds have been recorded along The Slade (coming north into the village) and adjacent to the village green on Martins Lane (heading south towards The Slade). The highest being double the 30mph limit!

The highest volumes of traffic in the morning are heading south through the village towards Witcham Toll (between 0800 & 0900) and in the afternoon heading north from Witcham Toll (between 1600 & 1800.)

The data is distorted because it is only a snapshot of events when the camera is in place at the specific location for a specific period and is affected by vehicles slowing down for the camera or by external events such as delays on the A142 resulting in more traffic coming through the village. However, it clearly shows that a lot of the traffic is not generated from the village itself but by vehicles travelling to or from Mepal or Wardy Hill.

A summary of the data is presented in the table below.

Position	Duration of Test (weeks)	Vehicle Count										Speed		Speeders	
		Average 7 Day Total	Daily Average		Highest Daily		Highest Hourly				Overall Average (mph)	Maximum Speed (mph)	Count (%)	Average (mph)	
			5 day	7 day	Count	Day	Count	Time	Count	Time					
1 The Slade - into village from the Toll.	22	4812	738	678	837	Fri	58	10-1100	95	17-1800	28	60	30	33	
5 Martins Lane-out of village towards Mepal	13	3243	509	456	581	Fri	44	08-0900	66	16-1700	27	55	27	28	
4 Martins Lane-into village from Mepal.	15	2298	339	305	387	Fri	55	08-0900	31	15-1600	24	45	8	33	
3 Martins Lane - green towards cross road.	29	3400	549	489	808	Thurs	148	08-0900	57	16-1700	27	60	24	34	
2 The Slade -out of village towards the Toll.	17	3909	578	530	729	Thurs	80	08-0900	73	16-1700	25	55	15	33	

2022/23 ACCOUNTS AND 2023/24 PRECEPT

The Notice of Public Rights and Publication of the Unaudited Annual Return for 2022/3 will be issued shortly. The Precept for 2023/24 is £16,500

BEST KEPT GARDEN COMPETITION

Judging has been scheduled for mid-June. We are replacing 'Best Overall' category this year with three new ones: 'Best Children's Garden', 'Best Organic Garden' and 'Best Small Garden'. Further details will be published on the Noticeboard at the crossroads.



One of the new seats installed at the Recreation Ground, courtesy Witcham Village Hall

SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

YEAR ENDED 31 March 2023

Year 2021/22		Year 2022/23
	RECEIPTS	
£		£
15300	Precept	16000
1298	RSPB Rent and Electricity Wayleaves	1087
1030	Cemetery	240
1339	ECDC CIL money	8497
	Donations 21/22 new trees (£479.60), village (£40) and	
524	RBL (£5). 22/23 Ely Cricket £100	100
0	Locality Grant Neighbourhood Plan	3475
5	Interest	116
1588	VAT re-claimed	1161
21084	TOTAL RECEIPTS	30676
	PAYMENTS	
7311	Staff costs	8143
	Admin:	
472	Insurance	495
0	External Audit (under £25k Exemption applied)	0
75	Internal Audit	75
	Gen Admin - toners, stationery, postage, tel, training, travel,	
1370	website etc	1598
444	Subscriptions	470
260	Hire of meeting venues	320
35	Chairman's Allowance	30
692	Grounds & Cemetery, equipment, etc	1211
2617	Village grass cutting/maintenance	2526
450	Grass cutting recreation ground (Cricket)	0
1535	Street Lighting Energy and Maintenance	132
242	LGA72 S142: What's On, website, CAB, BKG	541
110	LGA72 S.137	50
0	Neighbourhood Plan	3460
0	Play/Fitness Project Recreation Ground (trees)	955
1161	VAT for year*	1634
16774	TOTAL PAYMENTS	21640
	Receipts and Payments Book:	
46828	Balance carried forward from previous year	51138
21084	Add Receipts	30676
-16774	Less Payments	-21640
51138	Balance at 31 March (to carry forward to new year)	60174
	Bank Reconciliation:	
3775	Current Account at 31 March	1635
47560	Add Deposit A/cs	58673
51335	Total	60308
-197	Less un-presented cheques	--134
51138		60174

In 2022/23 we have

- Held 10 monthly meetings of the Parish Council plus 4 additional meetings to deal with planning applications and other urgent matters requiring attention before the next scheduled meeting. We welcomed the increase in the number of people attending these meetings to express their concerns and share thoughts.
- Engaged with residents at the Annual Parish Meeting on proposals to make a Witcham Neighbourhood Plan. Facilitated setting up a working group comprising members of the village together with some Parish Council representatives. Initiated the inaugural meeting held on 7 June 2022. As the qualifying body, the Parish Council submitted the Neighbourhood Area map which was approved by ECDC in January, enabling the Neighbourhood Plan to be made. In October, Consultants were engaged to assist the members of the working group. Progress is reported at Council meetings, see Council Minutes on noticeboard and website. <https://www.witchamparishcouncil.gov.uk> Grants are being sought to complete the project including an additional £8000 for Locality Design Code input so that a Design Guide may be appended to the Neighbourhood Plan.
Information about Neighbourhood Plans:
<https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/neighbourhood-planning>
- Considered and commented on 9 planning applications plus a number of amendments, Discharges of Consents etc. 7 applications for tree works. To view information about planning applications visit <https://www.witchamparishcouncil.gov.uk/planning-applications>
- Supported the community on announcement of closure of the doctor's surgery at Sutton, which serves many Witcham residents, by writing to the local MP (also Health Secretary) and NHS England/Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System expressing deep concern. We are pleased arrangements are in hand for interim provision of services by a contractor while issue reviewed.
- Provided and maintained recreation ground and children's play areas.
- Further engaged with residents on plans for replacement play facilities and proposed fitness equipment. Sought grants to help fund the project totalling c£50,000. Removed and cut back diseased trees in young children's play area in readiness to start project.
- Accepted the offer from Cambridgeshire County Council for cycle racks adj Village Hall
- Consented to 3 new park benches being located on the recreation ground from Village Hall Committee and accepted responsibility for future maintenance etc
- Enhanced entrance to roadway to Village Hall with landscaping and tree planting to mark Queens Jubilee.
- Consented to City of Ely Cricket Club 3rd team using recreation ground for 5 matches for which a donation towards grounds maintenance was received.
- Engaged with ECDC for new litter bins/repairs at recreation ground.
- Engaged with ECDC for new dog signs around recreation ground to remind people not to exercise dogs on the recreation ground which is utilised for sport and play.
- Reviewed grasscutting and maintenance at recreation ground, cemetery and other small areas around centre of the village, and engaged in new contract for March 2023 to February 2025
- Supported the First Responder team serving Witcham and made donation for equipment (LGA 1972, s.137)
- Monitored data from the Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign (rotated over 5 sites at The Slade and Martins Lane). Applied to extend scheme to High Street and Silver Street but was refused on grounds that these street light columns insufficient to support weight of equipment. Speed data passed on to the Police and Speedwatch team. Engaged in recruitment of new volunteers for village speedwatch team, who will shortly receive training and commence sessions.
- Maintained street lights (No.5) owned by the Parish Council. Engaged with Sanctuary Hereward for replacement lamp at first car park in Westway Place and commissioning of new and removal of old on the second car park.
- Began engagement with the RSPB for new agreement for Ouse Wash Doves
- Supported continuation of the monthly 'What's On in Witcham' and increased the Council's contribution for printing which has been upgraded (LGA 1972s.142)
- Been invited to comment as part of the Consultation process on 10 subjects including reviews of County and District Council Strategies and Policies, Anglian Water new

reservoir, Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership – buses and new road classifications, and the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan.

- Produced and circulated to each householder, Parish Council Newsletters and the Council's Annual Report. Maintained Council website for Agendas, Minutes, news, etc
- Reported issues to appropriate local authorities/bodies, eg highways including public rights of way, lighting etc
- Supported protection of the various public rights of way, including British Horse Society proposal to seek seasonal closure of Byway 269/7 known as Old Lynn Drove
- Engaged with District Council representatives regarding antisocial driving behaviours at Elean Business Park
- Reviewed our Policies and Procedures.



Bury Road (drove) February 2023

In 2023/24 we will

- Continue to engage with the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group on efforts for a Neighbourhood Plan for Witcham to be made.
- Provide opportunity and encourage people to take an interest in community life in Witcham – we ask residents to please do your best to support the village clubs and Witcham Village Hall.
- Continue to provide support for future healthcare facilities/GP surgery at Sutton.
- Maintain the recreation ground and children's play areas. Promote the health and well-being of residents.
- Progress refurbishment of play and fitness facilities. Now possibly in two stages depending on availability of grants and funding for the project.
- Install new bench in landscaped area by roadway entrance to Village Hall for commemoration of the Coronation of King Charles III on 6 May 2023
- Maintain the cemetery. Land for new/extension has not been found and parishioner's views will be sought in the Neighbourhood Plan survey which is expected to be circulated March/April 2023. We do have spaces in the Garden of Remembrance.
- Support the Village Speedwatch Co-ordinator in encouraging residents to come forward as volunteers to help with Speedwatch checks, including training.
- Endeavour to ensure there is a bus service for Witcham residents. Residents are encouraged to use the Ely Zipper service as much as possible to ensure continuity for the future.
- Work with ECDC, CCC, landowners and all interested parties on the future management of the network of the public rights of ways in the parish. (A new Management Plan will be required for Bury Road)
- Continue to engage with the community and regularly report on the Council's activities; to produce and circulate newsletters to each home and an Annual Report.
- Provide website and update with Council agendas, minutes and news.
- Continue to support the publication of "What's on in Witcham" by meeting printing costs and sharing news from the Council in between its normal newsletters.
- Work in partnership with other bodies and agencies, and where possible improve facilities and enhance the quality of life for people in Witcham.
- Participate in and respond to consultation processes at national and local level
- Training: Provide opportunities for continued development and knowledge for all Councillors and the Clerk/RFO

RECREATION GROUND – New children and adult facilities

We received three proposals which were presented at the public sessions held on 21st and 22nd January 2022. The Wicksteed proposal was the preferred option.



Proposals New Play and Fitness Equipment



Our thanks to Harvey, Jason, Nathan and Richard, for planting new tree at the recreation ground December 2022



ABOUT WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

- Comprises 6 Councillors. 4-year term of office, representing an electorate of 372 (Jan23)
- One employee - Part-time Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer
- Internal Auditor – LGS Services. External Auditor - PKF Littlejohn
- Meets normally on second Wednesday of the month except August and December – dates published on village noticeboard and website, together with agendas and minutes. Additional meetings are held for planning applications as required. There is provision at each meeting for people to attend to speak to Councillors on items on the agenda.
- The Council is always keen to involve people in community life in Witcham and will enlist the help and support of members of the community to serve on working parties for some projects which are reported back to the Council. There is currently no committee system.
- The Council carries out its functions financed by the Precept which is collected by the District Council through the Council Tax system. Other income is limited but does include an income from the RSPB in respect of rent on droves situated on the Ouse Washes. Grant aid is obtained to fund any projects from a number of different organisations as and when possible.
- Councillors have opted not to claim the Parish Basic Allowance for elected Councillors.

The Parish Council is responsible for

- approx 9.5 acres droves on the Ouse Washes
- recreation ground at High Street
- cemetery at Mepal Road
- infant play area and facilities for older children at recreation ground
- seats at recreation ground and cemetery
- 5 street lights (upgraded to LED 2021) (remainder adopted by CCC)
- bus shelter at High Street
- noticeboards at bus shelter Silver Street/The Slade and cemetery
- the Interpretation board at Silver Street
- village sign at The Slade
- signage roadway to Village Hall,
- cycle rack near Village Hall,
- 3 salt bins
- 6 dog bins
- 1 mobile vehicle activated speed sign (MVAS)
- red telephone kiosk conservation area (adopted 2010) (No longer in service)

**Please help keep Witcham clean and tidy
Use the litter bins**

When out with your dog, by the highway or on the network of droves/public rights of way, please be considerate and use the dog bins, or take home for the black refuse bag.

CONTACT DETAILS 2022/23

Council meetings are open to the public and residents are welcome to come along to meetings and to play an active role in the community. Your views and concerns are welcome, please address to the Parish Clerk in the first instance and it will be passed on at the next meeting of the Council as appropriate: clerk@witchamparishcouncil.gov.uk

<p>CHAIRMAN Mick Housden</p>	<p>mick.housden@witchamparishcouncil.gov.uk</p>	<p>17 The Slade Witcham Ely CB6 2LA <i>Responsibilities: Cemetery, Recreation Ground and Play Areas, CAPALC, Member Play and Fitness Project Working Party & Neighbourhood Plan Working Group</i></p>
<p>VICE-CHAIRMAN Karl Mackender</p>	<p>karl.mackender@witchamparishcouncil.gov.uk</p>	<p>19 High Street Witcham Ely CB6 2LQ <i>Responsibilities: Cemetery, CAPALC, Member Play and Fitness Project Working Party</i></p>
<p>Julia Bibby</p>	<p>julia.bibby@witchamparishcouncil.gov.uk</p>	<p>26 Martins Lane Witcham Ely CB6 2LB <i>Responsibilities: Cemetery, Best Kept Garden Member & Neighbourhood Plan Working Group Village Hall Trustee</i></p>
<p>Laura Holdaway</p>	<p>laura.holdaway@witchamparishcouncil.gov.uk</p>	<p>Witcham House Headleys Lane Witcham Ely CB6 2LH <i>Responsibilities: Cemetery, Member Play and Fitness Project Working Party</i></p>
<p>Jane Lucas</p>	<p>jane.lucas@witchamparishcouncil.gov.uk</p>	<p>8 The Orchards Witcham Ely CB6 2LR <i>Responsibilities: Cemetery, Public Rights of Way, Member of Neighbourhood Plan Working Group & Neighbourhood Watch Liaison.</i></p>
<p>Sally Wilkin</p>	<p>sally.wilkin@witchamparishcouncil.gov.uk</p>	<p>Witcham Equestrian Centre Mepal Road Witcham Ely CB6 2LD <i>Responsibilities: Cemetery, Public Rights of Way.</i></p>