



West Monkton Parish Council

# 2021/22 ANNUAL REPORT

## Your Parish Council

### Who we are

West Monkton Parish Council (WMPC) is made up of nine Parish Councillors and a team of three Clerks who are all passionate about our local area.

### **West Monkton Parish Councillors:**



Cllr Stuart Haskins

Chairman

[stuart.haskins@westmonkton.net](mailto:stuart.haskins@westmonkton.net)



Cllr Alan Hall

Vice Chairman

Member responsible for Water Resilience and Maidenbrook Country Park

[alan.hall@westmonkton.net](mailto:alan.hall@westmonkton.net)



Cllr Barry Gage

Chairman of Brittons Ash Community Hall (BACH) Committee and member responsible for footpaths

[barrygage@westmonkton.net](mailto:barrygage@westmonkton.net)



Cllr Hazel Ellis

Spital Trust representative and member of the BACH Committee

[hazel.ellis@westmonkton.net](mailto:hazel.ellis@westmonkton.net)



Cllr Mark Besley

Member responsible of Highways

[mark.besley@westmonkton.net](mailto:mark.besley@westmonkton.net)



Cllr Geoff Hope

Member responsible for Public Open Space, Recreation and Children's Play Areas and member of the BACH Committee

[geoff.hope@westmonkton.net](mailto:geoff.hope@westmonkton.net)



Cllr Paul Elliston

Member responsible Community Liaison and Transportation and member of the BACH Committee

[paul.elliston@westmonkton.net](mailto:paul.elliston@westmonkton.net)

### **West Monkton Parish and District Councillors:**



Cllr Ray Tully

Member responsible for Safe Routes to School and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), member of the BACH Committee, West Monkton Village Hall representation and Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) District Councillor

[raytully@westmonkton.net](mailto:raytully@westmonkton.net)



Cllr Norman Cavill

Member responsible for Water Resilience and LGR and member of the BACH Committee and SWT District Councillor

[normancavill@westmonkton.net](mailto:normancavill@westmonkton.net)

## District Councillor



Cllr Andrew Pritchard – SWT

SWT District Councillor

[cllr.a.pritchard@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.a.pritchard@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

## County Councillor:



David Fothergill – Somerset County Council (SCC)

Councillor for Monkton and North Curry Division.

Leader of the Council

[djafothergill@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:djafothergill@somerset.gov.uk)

## Parish Council Clerks:



Amy Shepherd - Clerk

[clerk@westmonkton.net](mailto:clerk@westmonkton.net)



Tricia Cavill - Assistant Clerk

[assistantclerk2@westmonkton.net](mailto:assistantclerk2@westmonkton.net)



Kate Welsh – Assistant Clerk (Community)

[community@westmonkton.net](mailto:community@westmonkton.net)

## **What WMPC does**

WMPC works collaboratively with members of the community and partners to deliver our vision and objectives for the Parish, going over and above what is expected from a Parish Council.

## **Our Vision for West Monkton**

Our vision is for WMPC and the local community to work together to protect and improve the social, recreational and environmental well-being of West Monkton and the lives of all who live, visit and work here.

## **Our Priorities and Objectives**

WMPC has agreed priorities and objectives, available here: <https://westmonkton.net/wp-content/uploads/parish-council/West-Monkton-Parish-Council-Vision-and-Objectives-Final.pdf>, focused on Our Environment, Community and the Parish Council.

## **What WMPC has achieved in 2021/22**

<b>Our Environment</b>
<p>Worked towards making the parish of West Monkton more carbon neutral by 2030 by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enabling the planting of trees in the parish. 1750 trees have been planted in Maidenbrook Country Park (MCP) during 2021/22. A total of 3600 trees have been planted so far at the MCP</li><li>• Delivered a hi-vis initiative to encourage children to cycle and walk to school safely. More than 85 hi-vis jackets have been given to school children so far.</li><li>• Delivered a seed swap event in the Parish in October 2021 and March 2022.</li><li>• Commenced enquiries about delivering a community transport scheme for the Parish.</li><li>• Provided a total of £4670.00 of grant funding for individuals and organisations for Climate Change projects based in the parish.</li></ul> <p>Used social media to promote recycling and reusing in the Parish to coincide with the blue recycling bag roll out. Toy swap and clothes swap events are also planned for 2022.</p>
<b>Our Community</b>
<p>Took action to understand our community members including their skills, needs and capacity by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing and agreeing a parish wide community survey. The community survey will be conducted on a pilot area initially and will be rolled out across the parish in 2022.</li><li>• Provided a Community Website – <a href="http://www.monktonmatters.co.uk">www.monktonmatters.co.uk</a></li><li>• Improved existing footpaths through the installation of new gates and stiles on Public Rights of Way across the Parish</li><li>• Delivered a new cycle and footpath through MCP to enable a safer route for school children walking and cycling to school.</li></ul>

- Provided £5114.52 of grant funding to charitable, small and local groups to deliver goods or services for the benefit of members of the community in the Parish.

Engaged with members of our Community by:

- Supporting the West Monkton Youth Club to provide a Christmas Disco.
- Supporting members of the community to organise street parties for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022.

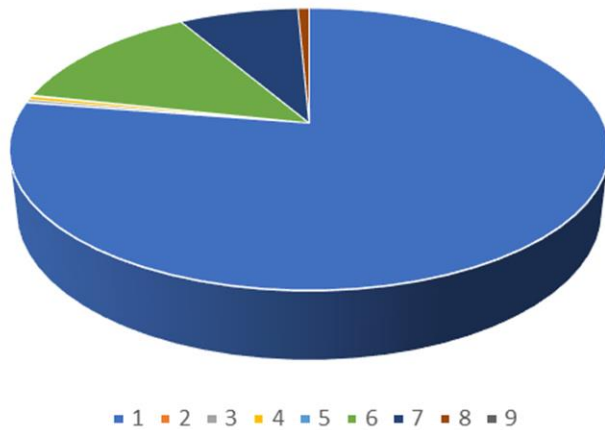
### **Our Parish Council**

- Been an open, transparent and proactive Parish Council, taking new projects forward and sharing information on the WMPC website [www.westmonkton.net](http://www.westmonkton.net) , Monkton Matters website [www.monktonmatters.co.uk](http://www.monktonmatters.co.uk) and the WMPC Facebook Page [www.facebook.com/westmonktonparishcouncil](http://www.facebook.com/westmonktonparishcouncil)
- Developed and published the WMPC Vision and Objectives to focus WMPCs activities on important matters in our Parish.
- Taken an active role in the LGR discussion to form the Somerset Unitary Council.
- Surveyed our local community to inform the WMPC response to the Community Governance Review (CGR) to form Taunton Town Council and expressed the view of the Parish that all or part of the Parish should not form part of Taunton Town Council.
- Used Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support the delivery of parish priorities and objectives including:
  - Restoration of footpaths
  - Delivering the MCP vision
  - Tacchi Morris refurbishment
  - Purchase of a Speed Indicator Device
- Applied for and secured grant funding to support our community work to develop a community website and survey and to deliver a pond and Forest School at MCP.
- Encouraged members of the community to give ideas of what WMPC should do and how money should be spent through regular posting on Monkton Matters, the Facebook Page and the Village News.
- Ensured value for money in respect of all of the Councils spend through obtaining quotes for all work.
- Publicised information about income and spend in a more understandable format (available below).

## What income does WMPC receive and how money was spent in 2021/22?

The information from the financial spreadsheet for this year has been presented as a series of pie charts below. If you are interested in further details, please do not hesitate to contact [assistantclerk2@westmonkton.net](mailto:assistantclerk2@westmonkton.net) <sup>1</sup>

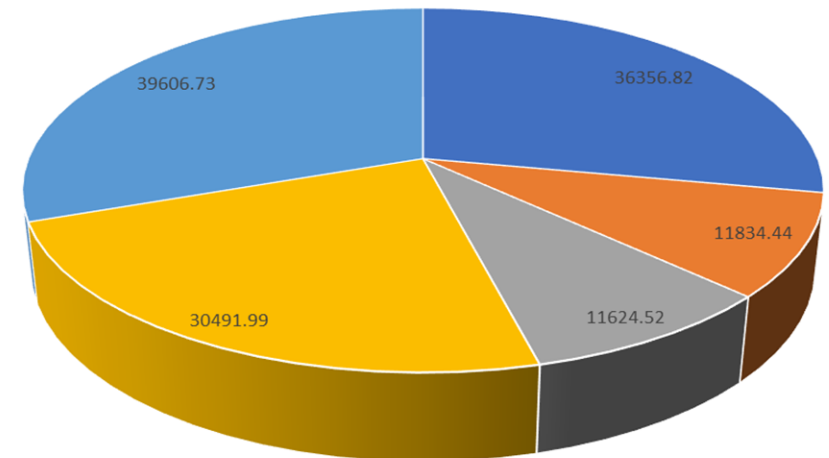
### Income:



Number / type of income	Income received	% of total income
1. Precept	£63509.15	77%
2. Interest	£68.66	<1%
3. Allotments	£270.00	<1%
4. Burial Ground Grant	£340.00	<1%
5. Footpath Grant	£100.00	<1%
6. VAT reclaimed	£10800.52	13%
7. Other grants	£6307.16	8%
8. Other	£596.33	1%
CIL <sup>2</sup> (not part of budget)	£136356.35	-
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£218,348.17</b>	

### Expenditure:

Number / type of expenditure	Expenditure	% of total expenditure
1. Staff costs	£36356.82	28%
2. General Administration	£11834.44	9%
3. Grants	£11624.52	9%
4. Environmental	£30491.99	23%
5. CIL projects	£39606.73	30%
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£129914.50</b>	

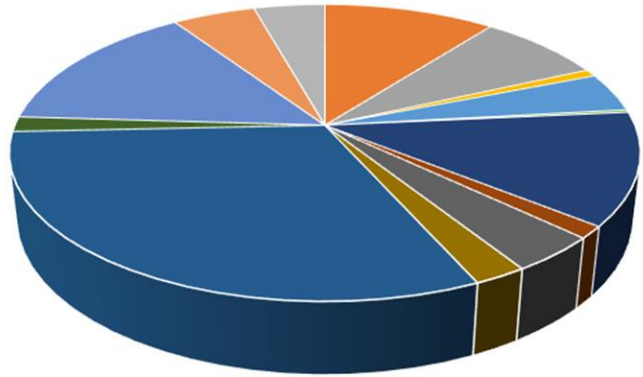


<sup>1</sup> The information in the charts is based on the data available in February 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) not included in the budgeted income.

**Expenditure explained:**

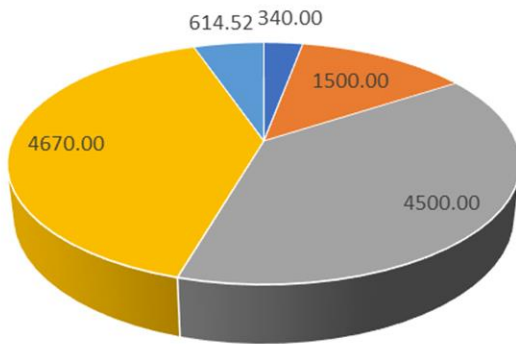
Environmental Expenditure



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Number / type of expenditure	Expenditure	% of environmental expenditure
1. General environmental	0	0%
2. Climate Initiative	£3200.00	10%
3. Play areas	£2350.00	8%
4. Bus shelters, signs and cleaning	240.00	1%
5. Meter box	£85.00	<1%
6. Community Governance Review	£3725.00	12%
7. Street Decorations (flags, Christmas)	£1200.00	4%
8. Create Streets Report (MH2)	£1200.00	4%
9. Equipment (Litter, safety, first aid)	£704.00	2%
10. Dog bins and grass cutting	£9452.59	31%
11. Litter bin purchase	£500.00	2%
12. Country Park	£4460.88	15%
13. Sports and general	£1547.42	5%
14. Lengthsman	£1327.08	4%
<b>Total Environmental Expenditure</b>	<b>£30491.97</b>	

Grants Disbursed

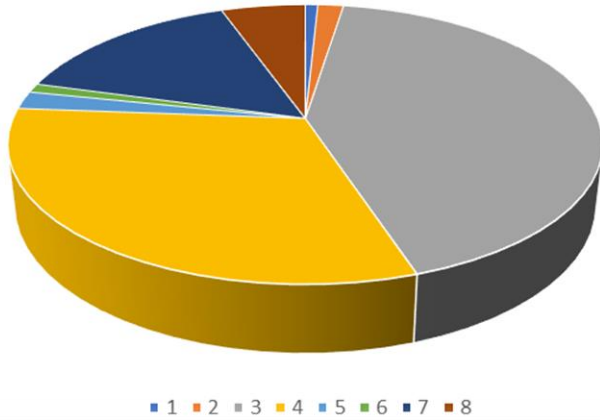


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Number / Grant	Expenditure	% of grant expenditure
1. Closed churchyard (from SWT)	£340.00	3%
2. Maintenance of burial ground <sup>3</sup>	£1500.00	13%
3. Wellbeing (including crisis)	£4500.00	39%
4. Climate resilience	£4670.00	40%
5. Youth Club	£614.52	5%
<b>Total grants disbursed</b>	<b>£11624.52</b>	

<sup>3</sup> Burial ground open to 'all faiths and none'

CIL Expenditure



Number / CIL expenditure	Expenditure	% of CIL expenditure
1. Install parks signage	£284.84	1%
2. Footpath restoration	£583.75	2%
3. Tacchi-Morris refurbishments	£14905.40	42%
4. Country Park safer route to school	£10991.80	31%
5. Country Park bulbs / hedges	£720.42	2%
6. Country Park legal fees	£368.00	1%
7. Country Park pond and forest school (extra to grant)	£5352.91	15%
8. Speed Indicator Device	£1919.00	5%
<b>Total CIL Expenditure</b>	<b>£35126.12</b>	

If you have any comments to make on any of the pie charts presented above, please contact [assistantclerk2@westmonkton.net](mailto:assistantclerk2@westmonkton.net)



## **Parish Councillor Reports:**

### **Cllr Stuart Haskins – Chairman’s Report**

Once again, I have the pleasure of informing you how WMPC has been working for you this year. Your Councillors have, as always been very busy dealing with the many day-to-day issues to arise as well as the many projects we have initiated, delivered or are planning to deliver in the very near future.

But first I feel in need to say a few words about issues that have, are and will continue to affect us all.

I feel sure you will agree that over the last 27 months Covid-19 has affected us all in everything we do but hopefully we are through the worst of things now and as the Government have now removed all the legal restrictions it imposed, responsibility for our own safety and health now rests with us all to protect ourselves and loved ones as we see fit. As I mentioned in last year’s report WMPC has throughout the Pandemic continued to operate as normal using Zoom virtual meetings but where legally required face to face meetings. Having become comfortable using virtual meetings, WMPC has now been adopted using zoom for all its none agenda/minuted meetings which has helped to reduce our personal travelling time reduce the carbon footprint of all Councillors and give us more flexibility when calling meetings.

If Covid had not been enough to worry about, on the morning of February 24th we all awoke to learn of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. I’m sure I speak for us all when I say this is the most frightening development and threat to our way of life since WW2 ended. WMPC has declared its support for the people of the Ukraine and published contact details of ex Pat groups and support groups on Monkton Matters where you can do your bit if you are moved to do so.

### **Somerset Unitary Authority and Somerset West and Taunton Local Government Review**

As you may know Somerset will become a Unitary Authority next year. This will see a new Somerset Council established and the end of District Councils like Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) / Sedgemoor etc. Driven by these changes SWT have chosen to embark on a CGR with the aim of setting up a new Taunton Town Council for the Town Centre i.e. the Un-Parished area. To us and most concerning of all in this CGR plan, was the proposal to include the surrounding Parishes of which West Monkton is one. During the consultation period you may recall the PC undertook a Survey in our Parish just around Christmas time 2021 to establish and understand the views and wants of the Parishioners. The result was a resounding NO to losing our Parish Council status and becoming part of a Taunton Town Council. It was armed with this information that WMPC made the strongest objections to SWT and I am pleased to say that we won the day with the only change to our Parish being the loss of the Hankridge out of Town shopping area. I would like to thank each and every one that took the time to reply to the survey. It was pleasing to know that you do value WMPC and the work it does. It is without doubt the strength of feeling shown by the response that has saved our Parish and its unique identity.

### **What has the PC been up to this year?**

I hope that you will forgive me if I duplicate some of the comments made by my fellow Councillors. Year on year the workload on the PC increases for a number of reasons. Our Parish obviously continues to grow and the Change to a Unitary authority has already created additional work for the Clerks and Councillors attending meetings. This will undoubtedly increase still further as the changeover to Unitary takes place and opportunities to take over some local services present themselves. Of course that’s over 12 months away and before that we have local elections for the Parish Council and Somerset Unitary Councillors in May of this year

Creating an engaged community is one of the PC’s key objectives and closely aligns with our aims for social and personal wellbeing of the community. To help us better deliver these objectives we have this year recruited Kate Welsh as Assistant Clerk Community. Kate has recently moved to live in our Parish from South Wales and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the PC team.

As Kate gets up to speed with her duties, I'm sure you will get to hear more from her on Monkton Matters and our website as she co-ordinates community volunteers, watercourse watchers and much, much, more.

As I said above, Community, Climate Change and our Environment is now at the heart of the WMPC Vision. Over the past year, Cllr Barry Gage has coordinated with SCC the replacement of all public footpath styles and gate with new self-closing metal gates thus making better access for walkers of all ages and mobilities to enjoy our spectacular surroundings. For this sterling work and other duties around the Parish we must once again thank Shaun Rolls our Parish Lengthsman.

Throughout the year and as we have done since the building of Monkton Heathfield Phase 1 (MH1) started, we have kept up regular meetings with the developers Persimmon and Redrow and at last I am pleased to say we have made real progress, Cllr Geoff Hope's work on this has been invaluable. As yet I am not able to make our agreement public but what I can say is that within the next 6 month you should start to see some significant progress on the replacement of dead trees, snagging and adoption of public open spaces and play areas and the creation of new sport pitches and changing facilities South of the Eastern Relief Road (ERR).

### **Maidenbrook Country Park**

I am pleased to say that the Partnership with Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council (CFPC) continues to run smoothly, negotiations with SWT regarding the lease for the MCP have now been concluded and the legal bodies should finalise things within the next 2 to 3 months and hopefully before the Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June. Co-ordinated by Jo Pearson, teams of volunteers have continued to maintain and plant trees in MCP. Construction of the Forest School and Wildlife Pond area which have been funded from secure grants obtained from SCC have progressed well and once again should be complete and well established by June. Both of these major projects have been designed and the construction work managed by our Councillor Alan Hall. The progress of both projects are a direct result of Alan's relentless input to the development of the MCP. Thank you Alan. Also in the MCP and to further protect general pedestrians and children walking to school from the Tudor Park and Nerrols area, Councillor Norman Cavill directed operations to construct the new foot path along the southern side of the MCP. This has made a significant reduction to the number of children needing to cross the A3259 at the junction with Maidenbrook Lane. Working with SCC highways we hope to further improve the crossing point here and on Yallands Hill in the very near future.

Of course this year we finally saw the long-awaited opening of the Western Relief Road (WRR) but unfortunately with the Creech Castle Junction and the A38 closed, we have not seen the reduction in traffic through Monkton Heathfield we had hoped for and in fact it's been quite the opposite. Councillor Mark Besley, the WMPC member responsible for highways together with myself and Councillor Cavill have spent many hours in discussions with SCC highways representatives looking at numerous options to overcome this problem. Some of these ideas have had positive results such as the 7.5 tonne weight restriction and 20mph speed limit but it's still disappointing that this in the main has not proved to be the deterrent we hoped for and general through traffic levels still remain unacceptable for a residential area. To further our aims to reduce vehicle speeds around our Parish the PC has purchased its own Speed Indication Device (SID). We are currently awaiting SCC Highway sign off for the proposed locations but hope that it will be seen out and about very shortly.

### **Parish Development**

As stage 2 of the Hartnell Farm development draws to an end for the foreseeable future, we are already well into WMPCs review and response to the Monkton Heathfield Phase 2 (MH2) planning application by Persimmon and Redrow. The early stages of MH2 when built should see the construction of a new through School, District Centre and of course Housing. WMPC has already submitted its initial response in writing which can be seen on our Website / Monkton Matters. These views have been overwhelmingly supported by an independent report commissioned by the PC from "Create Streets". This has been shared with other interested bodies such as Creech St Michael Parish Council (CSMPC) and of course the SWT

Planning Officer. It is very early to say more but there is much more to do on this application if we are to get a true Garden Town Concept development.

### **New Assets around the Parish**

It was pleasing to see the positive response from parents enjoying the new picnic benches installed in the Farriers Green play area this year and it is our plan to install more of these benches around the Parish as public open space is adopted and opportunities arise.

Other installations this year are Defibrillator at the Tacchi Morris Centre and a new notice Board outside of the Coop in School Road. It's worth noting the notice boards still provide a very useful means of communication when next passing one. New Bus shelters outside the Garden Centre have proven to be a worthwhile investment and appreciated by those using them.

### **Community**

As I said earlier, WMPC feels that developing our community and creating opportunities for engagement is vital to the future vibrance of our Parish. To promote this, with Bethan Turner, Business All About You who is commissioned by WMPC to provide PR and Communications support, WMPC has created the Monkton Matters website ([www.monktonmatters.co.uk](http://www.monktonmatters.co.uk)) where anyone can add an article or event relevant to the Parish which can inform, entertain, guide or promote social activities. From the start this site has been popular and the latest information shows this site having around 1000 hits per month so please take a look and if you have something to add please visit the website and submit a news article or event using the icons on the homepage.

I am pleased to say that the Youth Club at the BACH has been able to restart recently. Covid came along just as it was getting off the ground last time its restart is really well timed now.

In the coming weeks we are planning to undertake a community Survey. "Oh no not another one" I hear you say. Well this one is different to the last one it sets out to find out about the skills and talents in our community plus lots of other useful information. It's not compulsory and it will be totally operated within Data Protection guidelines and rules. So if you can, please take the time to complete it.

### **A final word**

So, finally a couple of thankyou's.

To all the Volunteers that work with and support WMPC in its work. It would be quite a list of names if I were to list them all so I won't. They know who they are. and I thank them for all their hard unpaid work. It's really appreciated by myself and all the WMPC Team.

To our Parish Clerk and her Assistants. Without them we could not operate and function as we do. A really big thank you for all the hours of paid and unpaid work you do.

And finally, to Our Councillors. Thank you for your input and support and dedication. It really does make the difference.

Wishing you all a Safe and Healthy Future.

### **Cllr Alan Hall – Vice Chairman**

Another year passes and I believe we have made progress in achieving the aims WMPC set. MCP has progressed to the extent that we are near to completing a lease with SWT to allow us the freedom to deliver a high quality park for local residents that gives the right atmosphere to enjoy the area for safe, healthy outdoor living. We have had a frustrating time with the powers that be to obtain control and enable us to deliver what our Parishioners need for their well-being and a space to breath. The aim this coming year is to get the park open once we have the lease finalised.

Over the past year, with the help of some outstanding volunteers, we have installed a pond within the park for the advancement of wildlife habitat, a forest school has been established for wildlife education and well-being of the young and work is progressing to construct a labyrinth for mental wellbeing.

Progression has been made with the developers of MH1 by being persistent on the lack of performance to finalize all outstanding issues and not backing down. This has brought a better working relationship and allowing us, as a Parish Council, to bring items to fruition.

Following the same approach, we are moving forward to develop the sports pitches following some 7 years of delays as the pitches were due in the construction phase of MH1. This will allow the future prospects of Taunton Rugby Club, West Monkton Cricket Club to expand their development of youth programs. The area will also allow for community use with the vision of the following additions for local residents:

- An area for a BMX cycling track
- An area for activities like Guides and Scouts
- Space of holding social events.

I am leading on developing the plans for this at the moment so that an application to SWT (the Planning Authority) can be developed and submitted as soon as possible.

I have worked closely with the Tacchi Morris management team to advance their facilities and construct a community café for the benefit of the local residents and keep the theatre technically up to speed with LED lighting enhancements.

We are applying a lot of control systems, following lessons learnt during the construction of MH1, and applying this into the planning development of MH2. We as a team are a lot older and wiser with the actions of developers. Along with the very detailed Neighbourhood Plan (NP) which is being regularly updated to keep this to the forefront of the planners so that it has weight.

More communication with yourselves has been driven over the past year to keep you abreast of what has happened and what is happening in the future and also the current situations.

This next year will be the culmination of all the hard work been done over the past few years by the team and I look forward to the challenges ahead, as I am sure there will be.

## **Cllr Barry Gage**

The Public Rights of Way and BACH remain my responsibility as in previous years.

Some 12 months ago it was agreed by WMPC to replace all styles with metal gates thus allowing easier access to members of the public. To date 16 gates have been installed by the village lengthsmen (Shaun Rolls) on the paths closest to the main populated areas leaving only a few more required on the boundary of the parish. The gates have been supplied and installed at no cost to the landowner and if anyone would like to take advantage of this offer please contact me at [barrygage@westmonkton.net](mailto:barrygage@westmonkton.net)

We are blessed with some wonderful walks around our parish and I would politely remind walkers to respect the private land you are walking on. Please ensure all gates are closed behind you, keep to the designated paths and keep your dog under control near animals.

I would like to thank all volunteers who help to maintain these byways for their help over the past twelve months.

The BACH has gradually returned to pre-covid level of use and remains an important asset of the village. Prices to rent the hall have been held at 2017 levels but recent inflationary pressures may see some modest increase in the near future.

Recently it has been identified that the storage facilities are not meeting the current needs of users and WMPC has embarked on a process to add additional storage. We are currently talking to the school on providing an additional building to the rear of the BACH which would provide storage both for School and BACH use. WMPC has also agreed to maintain the grass areas to the front of the school.

Please contact Maggie Little on 01823 323662 or [bachbookings@westmonkton.net](mailto:bachbookings@westmonkton.net) to book the hall. The BACH calendar can be viewed from the WMPC web site.

My thanks go to all volunteers but especially to Maggie for all her time spent running the booking system.

I am also a member of the Country Park Working Group and Audit Working Party and Chair of the BACH Committee.

### **Cllr Hazel Ellis**

I have lived in the Parish, on and off, since 1964 and was first elected as Parish Councillor in 1989. I have served continuously as such, until the present date, and as you can imagine, I have witnessed a great many changes in that time, mostly for the good but not all.

I am on the Brittons Ash Community Hall Management Committee.

I am the Council's representative for the Spital Trust Almshouses. These are occupied by four older ladies who have a connection within the Parish.

I run the local Rainbow Guide Unit, which although based in Ruishton, also covers West Monkton, Monkton Heathfield, Creech St Michael and the surrounding areas.

### **Cllr Mark Besley**

The huge increase in traffic through Monkton Heathfield following the temporary closure of the Creech Castle / A38 junction has led to many highways' challenges. Regular dialogue with SCC Highways department has resulted in the 20-mph speed limit, 7.5 t weight restriction, digital signage and 'black on yellow' advisory signs encouraging people not to rat run through Monkton Heathfield. It's hoped that when works to the Tone Way are complete traffic through Monkton Heathfield will get back to more acceptable levels.

Persimmon are required to install additional traffic calming measures on the Monkton Heathfield Road and there has been some delay in this happening – it's not sensible to install these traffic calming measures currently with the Creech Castle junction closed. The design is currently going through an SCC audit. The MH1 development has not been adopted by SCC and there remains a considerably amount of work to be done by the developers in terms of remedial highways work before this can happen – there seems to now be some urgency to progress these works.

There remains a commitment to carry out detailed traffic surveying once the Creech Castle junction is open (and possibly when the traffic calming measures are in place) – this survey will include traffic using minor roads surrounding the area (including Milton Hill). The results of this traffic surveying, the design of MH2 and existing plans will shape the design for more long-term traffic management in the area.

The planning application for MH2 includes little detail in the way of planned highways infrastructure – its pleasing to see the road between the Cricket Club and Langaller roundabouts still open and not closed as we have seen in the SWT plans. Concern remains that current plans show the proposed District Centre having a main thoroughfare through it and the lack of consideration to the 'Garden Town' status that the developers plans currently show. It is WMPCs strong view that the proposed extension of the ERR from the Langaller roundabout to Walford Cross should be put in at the onset of the MH2 delivery but there seems little appetite for this to happen.

A more detailed Highways Report (February 2022) can be seen on 'Monktonmatters' the new Parish website.

WMPC has no statutory powers regarding Highways issues we can only lobby and represent the interests of the community (which are sometimes conflicting depending on which part of the community people live in). WMPC has very active dialogue with SCC Highways dept and dialogue between WMPC and the developers has recently improved.

Potholes and road defects can be reported to WMPC or by using the [www.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk) website – type 'report a pothole' in the search bar. I can be reached at [markbesley@westmonkton.net](mailto:markbesley@westmonkton.net).

### **Cllr Geoff Hope**

This last year has been particularly challenging with the continuing pandemic limiting WMPC to mainly online meeting. However, this has not dampened our resolve to make sure the Public Open Spaces, Children's Play Areas and Recreational areas throughout the Parish are 'fit for purpose' to provide all residents with the space they need to exercise and enjoy the semi-rural nature of our Parish. To this end we are enhancing the facilities in these areas by making use of the limited budgets we have to improve the play and exercise equipment. We are also encouraging bio-diversity within the open spaces, making sure some areas are allowed to 'wild' before grass cutting during the months of spring.

We have also been working tirelessly to encourage Persimmon/Redrow, the developers of MH1, to complete all remedial work necessary to allow the adoption of the Public Open Spaces in this area. This includes a critical element that improves the 'wellbeing' of residents with the replacement of dead and dying trees. To prevent this situation going beyond the end of March, a time when arboriculturists would recommend trees should cease to be planted until later in the year, WMPC has been given permission and funding from Persimmon/Redrow to engage a local professional company to replace these trees.

By the time you read this report many of you will have seen the new trees planted in the most appropriate locations near to where the trees they are replacing were (in some cases) inappropriately or incorrectly planted. These new trees are planted at the risk of WMPC, and as such are easily identified with labels. We are encouraging all residents of MH1 to 'adopt a tree' and help us ensure their survival, by watering them during dry periods this year, and discouraging children and adults alike from harming them in any way.

Our work to adopt the Public Open Spaces continues, and we are optimistic we can achieve a positive outcome to this in the not-too-distant future. Once under our sphere of responsibility we will engage with the local community to allow residents to have greater involvement determining how these areas are managed and utilised for the benefit of the whole Parish.

I also continue with my responsibility as a member of the BACH Committee, and look forward to working with my fellow councillors and local resident volunteers to make this a facility for all residents of West Monkton Parish to use and enjoy as we build the spirit of 'community' within the local area.

### **Cllr Paul Elliston**

Building on the learning generated through the first part of the pandemic, over the past year I've been focused on further developing the WMPC strategy and approach to fostering a greater sense of community, particularly in the newer areas of housing. Rather than adopt a short-term sticky plaster approach to solving community issues as they arise, we hope to see the development of a community spirit that makes the most of who we are so that together we're able to reach our own solutions and take the community where we want it to go. We've taken a number of steps along this pathway already, not least the appointment of Kate Welsh, our new Assistant Clerk (Community), and the development of Monkton Matters, a community website to highlight all that is already going on within our parish. Over the coming year, our next step will be to use a community survey we have been developing, aiming to reach every household in the parish during the next year. As well as holding responsibility for Community, I also look after Transport on behalf of the PC and, over the last year, we've fed into

the government's Bus Back Better scheme as well as started to investigate the idea of a community transport scheme, but that idea remains at the drawing board stage for the time being. As always, if you have any ideas for improving our community, I'd love to hear from you.

### **Cllr Ray Tully**

As the WMPC representative on the West Monkton Village Hall Management Committee I am pleased to make the following report. Like most village halls up and down the country it has been another hard year due to Covid. The hall has now turned the corner and under the splendid leadership of Joyce Keyte things are looking very rosy for the future. Maybe if you have a few hours some of you may like to take an interest in the village hall and join the Committee or just help with functions. You will be warmly welcomed.

I am also the WMPC member responsible for the Safe Routes to school. As many of you will know we have major road works at Creech Castle across the Tone Way. At present with the closure of this road it is very safe for the children to walk to school. I still have reservations on the safe route to school on the A3259 and at present speaking to SCC Highways and hope we can come to some kind of resolution. I have suggested to Highways that a roadside barrier should be erected at the exit gate at MCP opposite Tudor Park.

### **Cllr Norman Cavill**

This last year I've been working on the SWT CGR panel which was to plan for a Taunton Town Council, this was altered to include all adjoining parish councils. Thank you to you all for your responses to the WMPC survey, an outstanding response that we should not be part of the town council and which assisted us to make our case. Our Parish is to continue with one alteration, that the railway line is now our new boundary not the Toneway.

In MCP, I constructed a cycle way to LN 120 specification, with SCC guidance and installed it in time for the start of the 2021 September term. With drier weather there is a fine top dressing to be put on this path, which will make it more useable for wheels. When the Creech Castle and the WRR works are completed, we will be able to address a better crossing at the bottom of Yallands Hill. This cycleway will become part of our planned links from the Monkton Heathfield developments to Taunton.

Plans for the next stage of development (MH2), Langaller to Walford Cross have been submitted to SWT. There are many improvements required to these plans if they are to comply with the SWT Garden Town principles and our Neighbourhood Plan, and if they are to address climate change. Major infrastructure addressing traffic movement and the potential for lakes involving the Walford stream need to be given higher priority.

It has been a pleasure to work with a dynamic team of Parish Councillors on many projects, in particular the MCP and the completion of MH1 public open space including the handover of the estate enabling it to become the great place it should be.

### **Clerk's Reports:**

#### **Amy Shepherd - Clerk**

The overall role of the Clerk is to ensure the smooth and lawful running of the Council and to advise Councillors accordingly. The Councillors' Code of Conduct, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders are revised, reissued and adopted every year. The Register of Councillors' Disclosable Interests is filed and maintained at SWT Council. Councillors can apply for a 'Dispensation' if Disclosable Interest would otherwise prevent them from speaking or voting.

From 2022, to reflect the increasing amount of business that the PC has to discuss, WMPC meetings take place in the BACH twice a month on the second Tuesday and fourth Tuesday of every month at 7.00pm. Members of the public are invited to attend the meetings and speak in Public Question Time. All agendas and minutes from WMPC meetings are available on the PC website ([www.westmonkton.net](http://www.westmonkton.net)).

In addition to the WMPC website and Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/westmonktonparishcouncil](http://www.facebook.com/westmonktonparishcouncil)), WMPC has also launched a community website this year ([www.monktonmatters.co.uk](http://www.monktonmatters.co.uk)). Monkton Matters is an online space giving news, information and details of events in the Parish of West Monkton (incorporating Monkton Heathfield, West Monkton and Bathpool). Monkton Matters is for the community and its contents is developed and posted by the community. All local residents are encouraged to contribute relevant articles or submit details of local events. The website is as good as we make it and the vision for the site is that it is a one-stop shop; the go-to place for all community matters.

Various local institutions, from schools to the police, from churches to the council, are represented on the site, posting updates. It is possible to find local businesses and services as well as hear about community groups, clubs and sports teams running in the local area. It has helpful information to aid exploration of the parish and its history as well and plenty more besides. If you would like to submit an article or an event for inclusion on the website, please visit the website and complete the form. Alongside news and events, businesses that are based or operate in the Parish can also add their details to the directory. If you would like to add your business details, please visit the website and complete the form. If you have any queries or would prefer to submit items for inclusion on the website via email please contact [editor@monktonmatters.co.uk](mailto:editor@monktonmatters.co.uk).

The BACH is a purpose-built community facility that with the support of Cllr Barry Gage I oversee the running of. A Committee made up of Councillors and volunteers including Gordon and Maggie Little and Richard and Jane Doble also provide invaluable support with running the BACH. Maggie with Gordon's support managing the bookings and diary and Richard Doble servicing the Defibrillator and Water Cooler and Jane Doble always being on hand to help when WMPC events take place. Although use of the BACH was impacted during the Pandemic, it is now fully open and available for use by individuals and groups for regular weekly bookings, group meetings, activities, and private functions. The BACH has a number of exercise classes, an art group, mums and baby groups and many more. Take a look at the online calendar available here <https://westmonkton.net/britttons-ash-community-hall-bach/bach-bookings-calendar/> or at the Welcome Screen to see what activities are taking place.

If you would like further information about booking the BACH, please contact the Bookings Officer, Maggie ([bachbookings@westmonkton.net](mailto:bachbookings@westmonkton.net))

The Spital Allotments continue to be managed by the PC. The allotments are popular and in full use, however, the PC holds a waiting list so if you are interested in having an allotment, please get in touch and your details will be added.

In addition to the on-going management of the PC assets and servicing the meetings of the PC, there have also been a number of projects that have started or continued during 2021/22 that I have supported. These include:

1. MH1 Public Open Spaces – negotiations have continued throughout the year with the developers about the completion and handover of the Public Open Spaces in MH1 to the PC to manage following their completion.
2. Installation of a Defibrillator at Tacchi Morris Arts Centre, this is in addition to the Defibrillator available at the BACH.
3. The purchase of a Speed Indicator Device (SID) for use in the Parish. The locations for the installation of the SID are being negotiated with SCC.
4. Planting 7 beech trees in the Dyers Brook Corridor as part of the SWT Free Trees Initiative.



5. Taken an active role in conversations about the LGR to create a New Somerset Unitary Council and the CGR to create a new Taunton Town Council.
6. Reviewed proposals and developed a WMPC response to the MH2 planning application.
7. Negotiated with representatives of Persimmon Homes and SWT about the delivery of the MH1 Sports Pitches.
8. Read and developed responses to local and national consultations about matters that affect our Parish.
9. Negotiated with representatives of SWT about obtaining a lease for MCP.
10. Negotiated with SCC Highways, SWT, the Environment Agency, Wessex Water and the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) about flooding issues and concerns in our Parish, including drain improvements, clearing of ditches and the effectiveness of the attenuation ponds in the Parish.
11. Reviewed and noted the conditions of Planning Permissions and Section 106 agreements to ensure the obligations are delivered.

This year has also seen the recruitment of Kate Welsh, Assistant Clerk (Community), a great and much needed addition to the team of Clerks. Kate's focus is on developing our Community and although Kate has only been working for WMPC since October it is already clear to see the difference she is making in our Parish.

If you would like any further information about any of these projects or have any ideas of other projects that the PC could support, please get in touch – [clerk@westmonkton.net](mailto:clerk@westmonkton.net).

## **Tricia Cavill – Assistant Clerk**

### **Responsible Financial Officer Report**

The WMPC Financial Regulations govern the way WMPC finances are run.

Daily, weekly and monthly accounting tasks are carried out by the Responsible Financial Officer. The tasks include paying for goods and services, maintaining the payroll, pensions and HMRC, obtaining quotes, monitoring the budget, ensuring that adequate insurance is in place for the Council, its employees, and its assets, keeping Councillors and Clerks up to date with latest ideas and legislation by ensuring regular training is available, ensuring that WMPCs communications and IT are up to date and operating efficiently, asset management and risk assessment.

When commissioning work, WMPC obtains a number of quotes, to ensure best value, and interest from local suppliers is viewed favourably.

Every month a financial spread sheet is issued which demonstrates receipts and payments, conformity with budget line by line, and a bank reconciliation. The Council is not VAT registered and VAT is reclaimed quarterly.

### **Audit Working Party**

Once a quarter the Audit Working Party (AWP) meets to review WMPCs finances as part of the risk management procedures in place. At these meetings a more detailed bank reconciliation is scrutinised, the quarterly VAT reclaim is reported, the Financial Regulations are kept under review, and other matters needing attention are considered.

The AWP remains vigilant on the level of exposure of the bank balances and investments. The AWP considers grant applications received in two windows, 1 April to 15 May, and 1 September to 15 October. Further information on the Grants Policy can be found on the website [www.westmonkton.net](http://www.westmonkton.net).

Recommendations from the AWP are made to main Council.

## **The Budget and Precept**

The budget and precept are set in November for the year ahead. The main source of income for the Parish is the precept which is based on the budget.

In November 2021, a review of last year's budget and the year to date was undertaken; and the services that were likely to be devolved under the move to a Unitary Authority were taken into account.

CIL is an additional source of income, received from developments in the area, which is a Levy paid to the Local Planning Authority (SWT), of which the Parish Council receives 25% because it has a NP. The proportion would only be 15% without a NP. The CIL funds must be spent within 5 years or handed back.

The budget reflects the needs and aspirations of the growing community in our Parish and WMPCs desire to maintain all the Parish as a safe and pleasant place to live and work.

An outline budget for the next three years is included in the budget preparation to ensure a degree of future proofing is built in.

The precept for 2022/2023 has remained at approximately the same level as last year, although, with more devolved services likely under Unitary, then the precept may have to increase in the future.

## **Internal and External Audit**

The Internal and External Audits of WMPC documents were completed successfully for the year 2021- 2022. Recommendations from the Internal Auditor have been incorporated into the regular financial procedures of the Parish.

The Internal Auditor has been appointed for the year ending 2022, and work on the year end accounts will begin soon.

The report on the External Audit, which is conducted by the Audit Commission, can be inspected by members of the public by appointment, please look out for the notice on the website in July.

If you have any ideas to help improve the Parish, please let us know!

## **Neighbourhood Planning**

After two years of work, the revisions to the NP were completed and submitted to SWT in October 2021, by the NP Steering Group, ably led by Mr K Tutill. After further internal consultations at SWT, the Revised Plan was sent to the Independent Examiner for review. Correspondence from her is expected shortly.

Why was the NP revised? Since the NP was made in 2018 there have been numerous changes in national and local legislation and policies, and the Plan needed updating to retain its relevance and validity. The NP is very focussed on the environment of the two Parishes and the revisions, plus two additional polices, reflect changes in the importance being placed on environmental issues.

The Local Planning Authority (currently SWT) must maintain a 5-year supply of buildable land, and at the moment the levels are perilously close to falling below what is required. In the event of an inadequate supply of land, any developer can put in a sustainable planning application and not expect it to be refused. Having a NP for our area in place and up to date is an important way of assisting WMPC to protect the area against any unsuitable development proposals.

## **Planning**

Covid restrictions helped the Council during the past 18 months to become very used to virtual meetings, and the close examination of numerous complex plans and reports for Planning matters benefitted from the PC's investment in technology at the BACH. There is a very large interactive white screen which allows both actual and virtual participants to study applications closely. Power-point presentations are prepared for every Planning application. Planning is included on

the agenda of both PC meetings each month. Members of the public are welcome to attend and speak. Since 1st April 2021 to the time of writing (18/2/2022) over 44 planning applications have been considered by WMPC and comments submitted to SWT (the Local Planning Authority). The submitted comments can viewed on SWT under the application registration number. Of the 44 applications, 9 have no decision made on them yet, 29 have conditional permission granted, 2 were refused, and 4 were withdrawn. Most applications are accompanied by reports on various elements of the development ranging from Sustainable Urban Drainage to Ecology to Travel Plans. The reports are posted on SWT website. Prior to planning meetings, the reports are read, notes prepared for councillor discussions, and a check made for conformity with NP policies. SWT has introduced two new checklists, Climate action and Biodiversity: it is disheartening to see how many applications fail to treat these checklists with the gravitas they deserve. Some applications are waiting for a decision, it is possible that they are waiting for guidance from SWT on 'Phosphates' to ensure that developments in West Monkton do not exacerbate the problems on the Ramsar Conservation sites on the Somerset Levels. It is likely that the Phosphate guidelines may influence plans WMPC may have for future public planting schemes. It is also likely that Developers will have to take appropriate measures to ensure any development is 'zero phosphate' in the future.

The application for the second part of the Monkton Heathfield Urban Extension was registered at SWT just before Christmas. You can make your views known by contacting SWT, the application is 14/21/0047.

### **Maidenbrook Country Park**

WMPC remains committed, with CFPC, to the MCP. A large grant from SCC Community Chest has allowed the development of the Forest School and the Wildlife Pond, work is ongoing on both these projects. Work on the labyrinth has begun.

### **Climate initiative**

WMPC has developed a timetable for Climate Initiatives, working in conjunction with 'Businessallaboutyou'. Six months of information, events and activities are developed at a time, and we are now in our 'second term'. Several successful events and articles have been tabled via social media, tying together the various environmental initiatives available in the Parish.

There have been seed swaps and food bank collections to save waste; free hi-viz vests for schoolchildren and bike marking to encourage walking and cycling; sunflower growing to encourage pollinators; litter picking and ditch clearing. A team of Watercourse Watchers has been assembled to report back anything untoward on their stretch of water or attenuation pond to keep our watercourses safe.

Trees have been obtained from various sources and planted in the Parish. It is hope more will follow.

A Safer Route to School has been installed at the Country Park to broaden the choice of route available for those walking or cycling between Nerrols and Yallands Hill.

Grants have been provided to individuals and organisations to assist with retrofitting buildings with extra insulation, and the lighting system at Tacchi-Morris has been assisted by a PC grant to change to LEDs resulting in huge savings of energy. Other grants have helped promote outdoor activities and exercise for health and well-being.

If you have ideas to help the Parish Climate Initiative, please get in touch!

### **Kate Welsh – Assistant Clerk (Community)**

I joined WMPC in October 2021, I am new to the area and have spent much of my career working with schools, young people and the community in various roles in the Vale of Glamorgan. This role has offered me new and exciting challenges to support community development in West Monkton Parish which is an ever-growing vibrant community.

Working alongside the Clerk and Assistant Clerk, I have been learning the formalities of WMPC as well as developing a volunteering programme, we are now equipped with various policies and procedures. As a parish, volunteers have come

together to take part in litter picking, this is well attended and we hope more of you will be keen to get involved and keep our parish tidy; we have all the equipment you need so join us on the last Sunday of each month.

There are various other opportunities arising such as gardening, home help, companion volunteers, where we hope to work alongside Debbie Harris our Village Agent to support some of the more vulnerable people in our community.

I come from a well-being background and cannot emphasise enough the importance of looking after our own well-being in these difficult times and tend to use the following model when thinking of supporting individual wellbeing; The 5 Way of Wellbeing. This is used by various agencies in the UK including the NHS, Mind and various other reputable organisations.



To **give** time to help your community is one way we can improve our own well-being. We will be looking for volunteers to help us in a range of upcoming initiatives such as help with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, the development of a community fridge and we are also looking into the possibility of a community transport scheme.

Looking forward in the coming year, I would like to develop a youth voice at our Parish Council and any young people interested in getting involved, please get in touch and we can work together to make this happen.

This past year the Parish Council has developed 'Monkton Matters' which has been successful in reaching out the community about events and news in the Parish and other matters of interest in the wider area. If you have not visited the webpage or the Facebook page, please do take a look. If there are any useful groups you think I could link in with then please let me know, I am keen to support people on the ground and am a very approachable and easy to get along with!

If you have any other ideas for supporting the community or just want to get in touch with me to share some information then please contact me or come along to our Parish Council meetings which are open to members of the public at any time.

*The reports from Councillors are presented in accordance with the CODE OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY PUBLICITY 2011, the guiding principles of which are that publicity by local authorities should: be lawful, be cost effective, be objective, be even-handed, be appropriate, have regard to equality and diversity, and be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.*

## Meeting Schedule 2022/23

Meetings are held either via Zoom or in the Committee Room, BACH commencing at 7.00pm.

All PC meetings are open to the public and there is usually a Public Question Time (at around 7.10pm) where the formal meeting is suspended whilst questions and comments are welcomed from anyone living in the parish. To avoid disappointment, please note that this is not a discussion forum. .

## Calendar 2022

January							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
52						1	2
1	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
3	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
4	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
5	31						

February							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
5		1	2	3	4	5	6
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
7	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
8	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
9	28						

March							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
9		1	2	3	4	5	6
10	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
11	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
12	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
13	28	29	30	31			

April							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
13					1	2	3
14	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
15	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
16	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
17	25	26	27	28	29	30	

Key:

	Parish Council Meeting – Business focused
	Parish Council Meeting – Project / Community focused
	Annual Parish Meeting
	Bank Holidays

May							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
17							1
18	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
19	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
20	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
21	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
22	30	31					

June							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
22			1	2	3	4	5
23	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
24	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
25	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
26	27	28	29	30			

July							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
26					1	2	3
27	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
28	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
29	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
30	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

August							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
33	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
34	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
35	29	30	31				

September							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
35				1	2	3	4
36	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
37	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
38	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
39	26	27	28	29	30		

October							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
39						1	2
40	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
41	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
42	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
43	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
44	31						

November							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
44		1	2	3	4	5	6
45	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
46	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
47	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
48	28	29	30				

December							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
48				1	2	3	4
49	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
50	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
51	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
52	26	27	28	29	30	31	

### Bank holidays 2022 UK

1 January	New Year's Day	18 April	Easter Monday	3 June	Platinum Jubilee	26 December	Boxing Day
3 January	Substitute day	2 May	Early May Bank Holiday	29 August	August Bank Holiday	27 December	Substitute day
15 April	Good Friday	2 June	Spring Bank Holiday	25 December	Christmas Day		