



WOODCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

# WOODCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

*Doing the right things and doing them right*

## **DRAFT** ANNUAL PLAN AND BUDGET 2024-2025

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## Introduction by Cllr Lucy Quinn - Chair- Woodchurch Parish Council

Dear residents, businesses and social groups,

Since the Parish election in May 2023, the first contested election for 13 years, Woodchurch Parish Council has been seeking opinions on how it can best preserve, support and enhance our community for years to come.

The feedback received from the recent Woodchurch Village Survey, along with an assessment of other data, has helped us to form our longer-term vision for the Parish and agree the important things we should be aiming to achieve, either directly or by facilitating the work of our many charities and groups.

I would like to thank everyone who responded to the survey. Your contribution has not only been invaluable in helping us to identify the things you think we do well and want us to continue to do, but also a range of new projects for 2024-2025, the things you would like us to influence and the things we should invest time and money in now for future benefit.

The survey responses were diverse in nature but on evaluation, generally fell in to one or more of 6 key themes. They indicated that you wanted us to concentrate on ensuring the following:

- 1) Woodchurch remains a nice place to live
- 2) It is a well- connected place in terms of infrastructure, transport and new technology
- 3) It is a safe and secure place to live
- 4) It is an environmentally friendly and responsible place
- 5) It is an inclusive place and
- 6) It is a place overseen by an effective and efficient parish Council.

Realistically, we will never have sufficient income to achieve everything that everyone wanted in the next twelve months. There are some things we can do quickly but some “big ticket” projects such as the proposed Neighbourhood Plan and new Pavilion/Sports complex will need further appraisal, consultation at various stages, phasing over a longer timescale and significant funding found to achieve them.

This plan is the product of a lot of hard work by our Council Clerk, the Council’s Survey Working Group chaired by Councillor Nash and Council members. I commend it to the Woodchurch public and assure you that it won’t just gather dust on an office shelf!

This is the first time Woodchurch Parish Council has demonstrated its commitment to the community in this way - and that commitment will be kept under constant review.

*Lucy Quinn*

Chair – Woodchurch Parish Council

# Vision, aims and objectives

## The Parish Council's VISION.

To improve the Quality of Life for people of the Parish; building upon the character and community spirit within the Parish, addressing their needs and encouraging all social sectors of the community to develop as an inclusive and vibrant community.

## The Parish Council's AIMS.

- i. To improve the development, appearance, and environment in which we live; ensuring that any changes do not cause future harm.
- ii. To be a strong voice on behalf of the local people and businesses, representing their views.
- iii. To ensure it does the right things for the community - and does things right

## The Parish Council's OBJECTIVES.

**Aim i: To improve the development, appearance and environment of Woodchurch; ensuring that any changes do not cause future harm.**

1. To maintain and improve the current level of maintenance and janitorial services in the village.
2. To work with ABC and KCC to provide appropriate, safe and healthy opportunities for recreation, leisure and education for all age groups.
3. To actively support the improvement of broadband and mobile services.
4. To facilitate the work of village's charitable and voluntary organisations; through access to external funding and grants, providing practical support where appropriate.
5. To promote a safer community through liaison with KCC Highways Dept, Kent Police and the Neighbourhood Watch scheme
6. To work with other Councils, local charities and social enterprises to improve and maintain public recreation space and the local footpath/bridleway network.
7. To safeguard the key village heritage assets
8. To encourage greater community cohesion and volunteer capacity
9. To encourage residents and others to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of the Woodchurch area.
10. To develop and support business and economic activity in the parish; including the encouragement of local residents to use local services.

**Aim ii: To be a strong voice on behalf of the local people and businesses, representing their views.**

11. To communicate with our residents, relate their views, needs and aspirations to the appropriate statutory and non-governmental bodies. To work with these organisations to ensure services and future development are responsive to local needs.
12. To increase public involvement through being open, transparent, and accountable to our residents by:
  - a. providing a public forum at every Parish Council meeting,
  - b. facilitating the Annual Parish Meeting,
  - c. consulting those affected on planning applications and other matters,
  - d. reporting our activities, finances etc. through newsletters, noticeboards, the Council web site and the Woodchurch social media network; and seeking feedback.
  - e. engaging with the community on matters of concern that affect them.
13. To respond on time to all planning applications and other statutory consultations.

**Aim iii: To ensure the Parish Council does the right things for the community - and does things right**

14. To maintain up-to-date Governance documents e.g. Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Risk Register, etc. that comply with the latest guidance and are fit-for-purpose.
15. To produce and circulate comprehensive and timely Council Agendas, Discussion Papers and Minutes to Councillors and residents.
16. To reach sound decisions, ensuring value for money
17. To maintain detailed and accurate budget statements and financial records that comply with the Council's Financial Regulations, and to produce timely Final Accounts that are to the satisfaction of the internal and external auditors.
18. To ensure that the Council complies with Government rules and regulations as to its management e.g. risk management, insurance cover, open government and transparency.
19. To ensure it considers matters such as environment, privacy, well-being and inclusion in all it does.
20. To ensure Council members have access to, and engage in, appropriate training.

# ANNUAL PLAN 2024-25

## Theme 1 - Woodchurch is a nice place to live

| <b>ONGOING ACTIVITIES</b>  | <b>When</b> | <b>Measure</b>   | <b>Dependencies</b>                                  | <b>Link to objectives</b> |
|--|-------------|--|--|---------------------------|
| Ensure Continuation of Grass cutting and maintenance of the Green  |             | 10-16 cuts pa  | Adverse Weather/Agreement with Village Green Charity | 1,6                       |
| Continue to manage and mow the wildflower meadow   |             | Once a year  | Adverse Weather                                      | 1,6                       |
| Continue existing street cleaning programme  |             | Weekly or As required                                      | Adverse Weather                                      | 1,6                       |
| Continue general maintenance of the village and ensure car park maintained in reasonable condition                   |             | Weekly or As required                                      | Adverse Weather                                      | 1,6                       |
| Continue to respond to consultations on planning applications  |             | 100% response  |  | 7.11                      |
| Continue to maintain the War Memorial  |             | By March 25  |  | 1,7                       |
| Continue to maintain the village clock   |             | By March 25  | Possible ownership issues                            | 1.7                       |
| Continue to ensure maintenance of the village flagpole/flags   |             | Number of volunteer hours                                  | (in conjunction with Village Green Charity)          | 1.7                       |
| Continue to seek quotations from specialised contractors to repair the Village Pump (i/c with Village Green Charity) |             |  | English Heritage and ABC Conservation policies       | 1.7.16                    |
| Provide support and funding to partner organisations engaged in enhancing the village and the Churchyard             |             | Number of grant applications/<br>Number of volunteer hours |  | 1.7.8                     |
| Provide support and funding to partner organisations engaged in Community events                                     |             | Number of events facilitated/<br>Number of volunteer hours |  | 4.8.10.19                 |

| <b>NEW PROJECTS</b>   | <b>When</b>      | <b>Measure</b>                        | <b>Dependencies</b>                                    | <b>Link to objectives</b> |
|---|------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Refurbish the public toilet   | By October 2024  | Achieved on time/Resident feedback    |  | 1.6.10.16.19              |
| Repair Village sign (i/c with Village Green Charity)  | By December 2024 | Achieved on time                      |  | 1.7.16                    |
| Upgrade power supply to the Hub   | By March 2025    | Achieved on time                      | UK Power Networks availability                         | 1.8.10.16                 |
| <b>INVESTING IN THE FUTURE</b>  |                  |                                       |  |                           |
| Examine the cost and benefit of engaging the community in developing a Neighbourhood Plan for Woodchurch to shape its future development and growth | By March 2025    | Achieved on time                      | Change in government and/or government planning policy | 6. 7.8. 9.10.11.12        |
| Produce concepts for consultation on a new Pavilion, Multi surface sports court and play area complex (in conjunction with Village Green Charity)   | By March 2025    | Achieved on time                      | Planning/Conservation Area issues                      | 2.7.8.9 11.12e. 16.19     |
| <b>INFLUENCING ACTIVITIES</b>   |                  |                                       |  |                           |
| Attempt to influence a positive outcome for the Woodchurch Windmill **  | Ongoing          | Windmill remains a key heritage asset | ABC policy/ Friends of Woodchurch Windmill policy      | 1.2.4.7.8 16.19           |

\*\* In the survey many residents wanted to see the Windmill preserved as a priority. However, the Windmill is not in the ownership of the Parish Council. It is owned by Ashford Borough Council and managed by the Friends of Woodchurch Windmill. It has been estimated that the cost of refurbishing it will be a minimum of £300,000.

## Theme 2 - A well-connected place

| <b>ONGOING ACTIVITIES</b>   | <b>When</b>              | <b>Measure</b>                  | <b>Dependencies</b>                 | <b>Link to Objectives</b> |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Continue and Enhance newsletter communication with residents                            |                          | Monthly/ Resident feedback      | Editorial policy of the Hub company | 8.9.10.11.12d             |
| Continue to Organise the Annual Parish Meeting  | Within legal timeframe   |                                 |                                     | 8.9.11.12d. 15            |
| Continue to lobby for the retention of rural bus services                               |                          | Retained service                | Bus Company/KCC policy              | 19                        |
| Continue to promote walking and cycling routes in the village                           |                          |                                 |                                     | 2.6.19                    |
| Develop the dedicated Parish Council website (already agreed)                           | Ongoing                  | Resident feedback               |                                     | 8.9.10.11.12d             |
| <b>NEW PROJECTS</b>   |                          |                                 |                                     |                           |
| Explore options for communicating with younger residents                                | By March 2025            | Council report/Achieved on time |                                     | 8.11.12.                  |
| Examine the case for improved mobile phone connectivity                                 | By March 2025            | Achieved on time                | Mobile operator infrastructure      | 3                         |
| Introduce quarterly pull-out in Hub newsletter  | Quarterly from July 2024 | Resident feedback               |                                     | 11.12.                    |
| Agree a Winter Resilience Plan to ensure residents remain connected in adverse weather  | By November 2024         | Resident feedback               |                                     | 1.4.5.8.10. 19            |
| <b>INFLUENCING ACTIVITIES</b>   |                          |                                 |                                     |                           |
| Continue to support reporting of potholes and other damage and influence speedy repairs | Ongoing                  |                                 | KCC Policy/funding                  | 1.5                       |

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### Theme 3 - An environmentally friendly place

| <b>ONGOING ACTIVITIES</b>  | <b>When</b>   | <b>Measure</b>         | <b>Dependencies</b>                        | <b>Link to objectives</b> |
|--|---------------|------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Continue to undertake Health and Safety checks on Council assets and equipment | Monthly       | H&S inspection reports |  | 1.2.6.18                  |
| Encourage expansion of Neighbourhood Watch Scheme                              |               | No of roads protected  | Demands on Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator | 5.7.8.                    |
| Continue to provide and maintain village defibrillators                        |               | Usage reports          |  | 1.2.6.19                  |
| <b>NEW PROJECTS</b>  |               |                        |  |                           |
| Introduce Highway safety measures at school                                    | By March 2025 | Achieved on time       | KCC Highways agreement                     | 5                         |
| Provide CCTV cover on the Green  | By March 2025 | Achieved on time       | Police/data/privacy issues                 | 2.5.6.7.10                |
| Examine speeding data and explore options for traffic calming                  |               |                        | Police/KCC interventions                   | 5                         |

| <b>ONGOING ACTIVITIES</b>  | <b>When</b>   | <b>Measure</b>             | <b>Dependencies</b>         | <b>Link to objectives</b> |
|--|---------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Promote/support the Village Shed project                           |               |                            | Planning considerations     | 4.6.7.8.                  |
| Use communications media to promote a Buy Local campaign           |               | Increased awareness        |                             | 8.10 11.19                |
| Use communications media to promote The village tidy up            |               | Increased awareness        |                             | 6. 8.11.                  |
| <b>NEW PROJECTS</b>  |               |                            |                             |                           |
| Provide/install new bat and bird boxes                             | By March 2025 | 10 boxes                   |                             | 4.19                      |
| Engage residents in Council Environment Policy                     | By March 2026 |                            | Volunteer time/availability | 9. 11.12.19               |
| Examine the feasibility of reintroducing allotments in the village | By March 2025 | Report received by Council | Land availability           | 2.6.8.12.                 |



## Theme 4 - An equal and inclusive place

| ONGOING ACTIVITIES   | When          | Measure                    | Dependencies | Link to objectives |
|--|---------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Continue to apply the public sector Equality Duty in all Council activities  |               |                            |              | 12.19              |
| Continue to apply S149 Equality Act 2010 - To advance equality of opportunity between persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not |               |                            |              | 8.12.18.19         |
| Use communications media to promote organisations that reflect or represent disadvantaged groups.  |               | Number of articles         |              | 8.19               |
| Examine the effect of pavement parking on wheelchair users and parents with children   | By March 2025 | Report received by Council |              | 5.6.19             |
| Consider inclusivity in all planning submissions and examination of future leisure needs   |               |                            |              | 8.11.              |

## Theme 5 - An efficient and effective Council

| <b>ONGOING ACTIVITIES</b>   | <b>When</b> | <b>Measure</b>                     | <b>Dependencies</b>             | <b>Link to objectives</b> |
|---|-------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ensure legal minimum number of meetings   |             | Min 4 pa                           |                                 | 12.14.15. 16              |
| Ensure agendas are available within legal deadlines                               |             | 3 clear days notice                |                                 | 12.14.15. 16              |
| Ensure (draft) minutes are posted to Council website                              |             |                                    |                                 | 12.14.15. 16              |
| Use communications media to better explain Council role, finances and performance |             | Number of articles                 |                                 | 11.12.<br>14.16.17.18.19. |
| Continue to manage the Council finances as per legal requirements                 |             | External Auditor certification     |                                 | 11.12.17.18               |
| Continue to develop a programme of Councillor training                            |             | No., of training sessions attended | Training body cancellations     | 20                        |
| <b>NEW PROJECT</b>  |             |                                    |                                 |                           |
| Review performance against this plan  | Quarterly   | Report to Council                  | Ongoing Councillor availability | 11.12.<br>14.16.17.18.19. |

## BUDGET 2024-25 - SUMMARY

| EXPENDITURE                  |       |                     |
|------------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| <b>Management Costs:-</b>    |       |                     |
| Staffing                     | 16970 |                     |
| Legal costs                  | 2255  |                     |
| Councillor costs             | 1000  | 20225               |
|                              |       |                     |
| Running Costs                |       | 6285                |
|                              |       |                     |
| Village Maintenance          |       | 7550                |
|                              |       |                     |
| <b>Grants/Donations</b>      |       |                     |
| Village Green Charity        | 6490  |                     |
| Annual wreath                | 50    |                     |
| Discretionary grants         | 500   | 7040                |
|                              |       |                     |
| <b>Total Payments</b>        |       | <b>41100</b>        |
|                              |       |                     |
| <b>New Projects 2024-25</b>  |       | 52200               |
| <b>TOTAL COSTS</b>           |       | <b><u>93300</u></b> |
|                              |       |                     |
| <b>Funded by:-</b>           |       |                     |
| <b>Precept (Council Tax)</b> | 45006 |                     |
| <b>Other income</b>          | 2794  |                     |
| <b>Reserves</b>              | 45500 | <b><u>93300</u></b> |

## 2024-25 - HOW YOUR COUNCIL TAX IS MADE UP

- The average (Band D) Council Tax payment for 2024-2025 will be £2196.51.
- Council Tax is levied (precepted) by 5 different tax raising authorities.
- Ashford Borough Council collects Council tax and re-distributes it to the other authorities. Ashford Borough Council's own services represent 9% of the total bill.

| Authority                                       | Key Responsibilities  | Average Charge for a Band D property in 2024/25 | % Change from 2023/24 | Who pays?                           | % of your total Council Tax bill |
|---|---|---|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Kent County Council (KCC)</b>                | Schools, Social Services, Highways and Transportation,                                | 1610.82   | +4.75%                | All households in Kent              | 73%                              |
| <b>Kent Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)</b> | Strategic provision of Kent Police services   | 256.15  | +5.3%                 | All households in Kent & Medway     | 12%                              |
| <b>Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS)</b>      | Provision of County Fire and rescue services  | 89.91   | +3%                   | All households in Kent & Medway     | 4%                               |
| <b>Ashford Borough Council (ABC)</b>            | Housing, Planning, Environmental Health inc Refuse Collection, Council tax collection | 187.96  | +3%                   | All households in Ashford Borough   | 9%                               |
| <b>Woodchurch Parish Council (WPC)</b>          | Maintenance of the village's assets, Representing the local population                | 51.67   | -0.2%                 | All households in Woodchurch Parish | 2%                               |

- At 2% of total bill, the Parish Council is the smallest one of those authorities.
- 73% of the total bill goes to Kent County Council for its services.

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