

# Grange Park Parish Council

Great Place Positive Community



## Grange Park Parish Council

### Annual Report

2023/2024



## Chairman's Report for 2023/24



Well, what a busy year it has been! This last year, with the aid of grant funding, we were able to accomplish several projects. You'll see details later in the report, but I'd just like to highlight a few: the installation of a highways activated sign with the aim of reducing speeding traffic; opposing the proposed housing development; footpath repairs at Foxfield Country Park, installation of solar panels at both the Community Centre and Foxfield Pavilion and the inception of our Woodlan Management plan involving maintenance and regeneration of our Woodland Areas.

Additionally, a significant amount of our time and energy has been invested in two main initiatives: the newly established cafe/bar at Foxfield Pavilion, which we are proud to have brought to the community, and the hiring of an experienced Environmental Officer to maintain all of our green open spaces and woodland areas internally. Both initiatives have been extremely successful.

We have also continued this year with our regular Litter Picks, Summer Fest, Firework display and the provision of a warm hub on a Monday morning where people can come together for some company and enjoy a cup of tea and a light lunch. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Despite challenging times, we have managed to stay on top of the core deliverables, making sure that community assets like our halls, playgrounds, and recreation facilities are kept up to date and functional, controlling our spending to deliver value for money, and making investments in the parish's future.

Going forward the Parish Council are looking into developing a Neighbourhood Plan. This is essentially a community-led framework for guiding any future development and growth in Grange Park. This work will continue into 2024/25 and will involve a number of public consultations.

Once again, special thanks go to all our staff for their hard-work, patience and for keeping things running smoothly despite many challenges/changes throughout the year. The growing ambition of the council has added to their responsibilities, and they have coped magnificently with additional stresses including managing and co-ordinating hospitality, the bringing in house of all environmental issues and realigning jobs to better fit the changing role of the Council. I also wish to thank my fellow Councillors for all their time and hard work freely volunteered on behalf of the community. It has been quite a year by any standards, and we will continue to explore opportunities to further enhance our community.

I would also like to invite you all to our community again events this year. Join us on **31<sup>st</sup> August for our Summer Fest** for a day of fun, live music, delicious food and activities for the whole family. Also, the **2nd of November for our Firework Display**, gather with friends and family to enjoy our refreshments at Foxfield Bar, street food and our firework display. Hope to see you all there!

Finally, we currently have one Councillor vacancy and a chance of more to follow. If you might be interested in joining our friendly team then please contact Tracy, our Clerk for details of what is involved.

Martin Smith Chairman,  
Grange Park Parish Council

You are invited to attend the

### **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024 at 7.00pm  
in the Small Hall at Grange Park  
Community Centre**

## Looking After Your Money



### Finance

As custodians of our community's resources, the Parish Council is committed to ensuring transparency and accountability in all financial matters. With this in mind, we present to you the latest Parish Council summary, outlining our various sources of income and expenditure for the financial year.

#### Income Summary

In 2023/24 our income was as follows:

Description	2022/23	2023/24	
Total Receipts	£261,785	£500,920	The significant rise in income is due to the additional grant funding that we have received from various sources. The precept has remained consistent over both years.
Annual Precept	£180,460	£180,460	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£442,245</b>	<b>£681,380</b>	If there is a shortfall at the end of the financial year, we have the capability to cover this by transferring monies for our general reserves' investments.

**Council Tax:** The primary source of funding for the Parish Council, council tax contributions from residents continue to support essential services and community initiatives (precept)

**Grants and funding:** We secured grants and funding from external sources to finance specific projects aimed at enhancing our community's well-being and infrastructure.

**Investment income:** Income generated from investments made by the Council has contributed to our financial sustainability and allowed us to pursue additional community projects.

#### Expenditure Summary

In 2023/24 our expenditure was as follows:

Description	2022/23	2023/24	
Total Payments	£306,801	£502,862	The changes between the years show that this year our total payments have doubled and this reflects the number of projects we have been able to deliver as a result of negotiated grant funding. Like us all, we have also had the impact of higher rates of inflation especially for utilities.
Staffing Costs	£131,662	£224,231	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£438,463</b>	<b>£727,093</b>	Staffing costs have increased due to growth and changes in the workforce

The Parish Council is dedicated to allocating funds in a manner that prioritizes the needs and interests of our community. Expenditures during the past year include:

**Maintenance and upkeep:** Funds were allocated for the maintenance and upkeep of public spaces, including parks, playgrounds, and communal areas, ensuring they remain safe and accessible for all residents.

**Community Event:** We continued to provide community events aimed at fostering a sense of belonging and engagement among residents of all ages.

**Projects:** Investments were made in infrastructure projects designed to improve our community buildings, utilities, and other essential services within our community, enhancing the quality of life for residents.

**Administration Costs:** Necessary administrative expenses, including staffing, office supplies, and utilities, were accounted for to ensure the efficient operation of the Parish Council.

In our financial planning process, we actively encourage and value any input from residents, as it plays a crucial role in shaping the allocation of resources which aligns with the aspirations of our community. If you have any suggestions or thoughts to share, please feel free to let us know by us using the contact details provided at the end of this report.

### **Hospitality – Cllr Richard Knott**

On Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April last year we opened the newly refurbished Foxfield Bar, following a successful trial of serving drinks and food from Foxfield over the previous summer. The new bar increased kitchen capacity, serving space and allowed us to provide a permanent and comfortable seating area in the Bar. The menu offering was increased, and ‘proper’ coffee and draft beer was made available. We also invested in a pool table and TNT Sport. The aim was to provide a space for all the community to come and meet and to increase the usage of the pavilion which was often sat empty.



Well, what a year it has been, and the support and usage massively surpassed our expectation. The financial aim was always to break even, we assumed that we would do better in the summer with the finances raised covering the cost of keeping it open even in quieter times all day every day and during the winter. We have been busy all year round and this has allowed us to invest in additional required equipment and to look at future projects that will improve the facility such as improving the patio, any money made from the Bar will be reinvested into community projects.

Events included celebrating the Kings’ Coronation, live music, opening at the summer fest, breakfast with Santa and a new year’s party.

The success at Foxfield Bar has been down to the community supporting and using the facility, from Football & Cricket teams, fitness groups, dog walkers, art & craft groups, after school relaxation and support attending our events. Thank you to everyone for supporting us, we will look to continue to improve going forward, but we really are glad that the project has been well received.

We do get asked if Foxfield Bar can be hired for private use, however we want to always keep it open and available for anyone to come in and use at all times, so we don’t have private functions however that is where the Snug comes in.

Clearly with Foxfield Bar opening and becoming so popular the Snug has become quieter and so the decision was made to keep it as a private hire function space. It has proven popular for Baby Showers, Children’s football parties (alongside the MUGA), wakes and birthday parties. We also open alongside the wrestling, bowls club matches and for Karaoke and Bingo. It has been pleasing that the Snug is still used and appreciated alongside Foxfield Bar.

So, thank you to everyone for your support this year in using our two social venues.

## **Environment – Cllr Andy Millerchip**

- Maintained our high standards for the health and appearance of Grange Park’s public open spaces.
- By bringing the grounds maintenance service in-house we have increased the certainty of keeping our quality standards high and we have begun to make improvements in the appearance of our shrub beds, hedgerows and grassed areas by working on them exactly when they need working on.
- We have continued to be responsive to residents who have concerns about the environment. All concerns are listened to and, where appropriate, action quickly taken.
- Despite dealing with a lot of change we came in on budget



## **Woodland**

We are now one year into our five- year woodland management plan. This plan aims to transform our woodland so that they become sustainable and healthy for future generations. The main categories of action are:

- Thinning to allow strong trees more room to develop.
- Clearing pockets of woodland and replanting with new species to increase diversity and improve woodland structure. Thus, removing the reliance on the success of a single species.
- Coppicing in the understorey to improve its health and structure.
- Removal of dead dying or dangerous trees and trees at risk of impinging on residential property.
- Building community spaces in our woodlands to facilitate more people taking pleasure from and learning about them.

During this first year we have done enough work to stay on track. Due to weather and resource availability action has been a bit scattered moving from one area to another as the opportunities arose. As we move into our second year, we need a more detailed plan to ensure that we stay on target.

## **Manor Oak Planning Proposal Resistance**

Along with our neighbours, Quinton, the PC has orchestrated the defence of our parish from an attack by MOH who want to build 900 houses in the surrounding fields. There are 320 letters of objection to the application on the planning portal. The PC’s own letter is a strong argument against planning permission being given. From the many meetings held there is a strong lobby of support for us among our WNC district councillors. The PC has contributed to the formulation of a new WNC planning policy. The new policy makes it harder for permission to be granted. The application is now waiting for the planning officer to make his recommendation. We hope that we have done enough for that recommendation to be to decline planning permission. Either way, the next steps for us are to continue to support the adoption of the new planning policy and to attend the planning committee meeting which will debate the planning officer’s recommendation to reach their decision.

## Community – Cllr Julie Bainbridge

It has been a busy year at Grange Park Parish Council, we celebrated the Kings Coronation, the community engaged with us regarding their views on the proposed Manor Oak planning application and the regular Community Litter Picks, Community Lunch Club and Community Matters Meetings continued throughout 2023/24.



### King's Coronation

In May, we celebrated the King's Coronation with a Coronation Big Lunch - Picnic in the Park. It was a fantastic day, the local community enjoyed live music in the sunshine at our beautiful Country Park.

During the celebration weekend, Grange Park Parish Council ran a Best Dressed Home competition, local residents were encouraged to vote for their favourite home. Thank you to everyone who voted and thank you to the local residents who took part and decorated their homes for the community to enjoy.

On Bank Holiday Monday, the Grange Park Community Litter Pick took part in The Big Help Out with a litter pick of Foxfield Country Park. Thank you to everyone who joined us, your help keeps Grange Park looking great!

For a detailed review of the King's Coronation events, please see the Grange Park Parish Council website:

[kings-coronation-weekend-review-gppc.pdf \(grangeparkpc.org\)](https://www.grangeparkpc.org/kings-coronation-weekend-review-gppc.pdf)

[grangeparkpc.org/uploads/letter-from-buckingham-palace.pdf?v=1704457258](https://www.grangeparkpc.org/uploads/letter-from-buckingham-palace.pdf?v=1704457258)



## Manor Oak Planning Application



In August, Manor Oak Homes submitted their planning application to build 900 houses on land to the south and east of Grange Park. In September the Parish Council engaged with the community to encourage local residents to have their say on the planning application.

Thank you to all the local residents who submitted their comments on the planning application to West Northants Council and to those that came to meet us to view the proposal plans and relevant documentation on displayed in Foxfield Bar.



Grange Park Parish Council submitted their objection to the proposed planning application submitted by Manor Oak Homes and are currently awaiting further information from West Northants Council on the progression of this proposed planning application.

## Community Litter Picks

The Community Litter Picks continued to take place monthly, and the Council completed its first Business and Community Litter Pick in December 2023 with employee from both Amazon and GXO in attendance.

Thank you to all the local residents who regularly attend the Community Litter Picks. Thank you to West Northants Council, who collect all the rubbish generated from the litter picks. Also, thank you to the team at Amazon on Grange Park for donating new litter pickers and bin bags.

It is always great to see new friendly faces at the litter picks, if you are interested in attending or would like further information on the Grange Park Community Litter Pick, please visit the Parish Council website.

[Grange Park Parish Council \(grangeparkpc.org\)](http://grangeparkpc.org)

## Community Lunch Club

Are you looking to get out and meet up with others for a friendly chat?

The Community Lunch Club takes place on Monday mornings in The Snug/Café Bar from 11.30am.

Refreshments are provided, including a hearty bowl of soup with crusty bread (catering for various different dietary requirements).



The Community Lunch Club builds strong relationships with residents within Grange Park and the surrounding local areas. The club has links with the local NHS social prescribing team and Police Community Support Officer, it is also regularly attended by the Grange Park Parish Councillors.

**Are you looking to get out  
and meet up with others  
for a friendly chat?**

**Come and join us for chat and laughter whilst  
enjoying a hot drink and a bowl of soup.**

**Monday Morning  
11.30am - 1.30pm  
at The Snug (Café Bar)  
Grange Park Community Centre  
NN4 5FZ**

**Complimentary refreshments, including soup  
Everyone is welcome**



The Community Lunch Club celebrated its first year in November, please see the End of Year Review for the Community Lunch Club on the Grange Park Parish Council website:

[community-lunch-club-end-of-year-report-2023.pdf](https://www.grangeparkpc.org/community-lunch-club-end-of-year-report-2023.pdf)  
([grangeparkpc.org](https://www.grangeparkpc.org))

Thank you to Debbie, a local resident, who helps run the weekly Community Lunch Club.



## Community Matters Meeting

Grange Park Parish Council hold regular meetings with Grange Park businesses. At present we have attendance from Amazon and GXO however, we would like to expand this to include more businesses within our local community. The meetings are an opportunity to raise any local issues and work together to resolve these issues.



If you are a local business and would like to get involved and make a positive difference to the local community, please get in contact with the Parsh Council.

## Road Safety – Speed Indication Device (SID)

SID signs are interactive displays which react to traffic speed. The sign shows the vehicle speed, and a reminder message is displayed to either slow down or thank the driver for keeping to the speed limit.

Funding was secured from the Northamptonshire Safer Roads Alliance (NSRA) Road Safety Community Fund to cover the cost of a SID sign.



The SID sign is battery operated enabling Granger Park Parish Council to regularly move the sign to different locations.

The Parish Council would like to thank the NSRA for their financial support, thank you to Steve Barber, Road Safety Officer at West Northamptonshire Council for your knowledge and support.

Further information on the SID sign can be found in the Community Matters Road Safety Improvements in Grange Park, Installation of a SID report.

## A Community that CARES is a community that THRIVES

Thank you to all the local residents and local businesses who are actively involved in making a difference in Grange Park.

A special mention to:

Seema

Seema set up a Creative Community Art Club for Adults in Grange Park in 2023. It is a great opportunity to meet new friends and learn new skills. Seema volunteers her time, resources and shares her skills and knowledge.





Richard and Joshua

Thank you to Richard and Joshua regularly join the Community Litter Pick each month. Well, done to Joshua, who was recently awarded a green Blue Peter badge, to recognise his commitment and care to the environment.

Donal

Donal voluntarily regularly litter picks in Grange Park with his grandchild and he also runs sessions to support local residents improve their English.

Finally, a massive, **Thank You** to the staff team at the Parish Council for their dedication and commitment to their work in the Grange Park community.

On a personal level, I would like to thank the staff team for their support and guidance throughout my role as a Parish Councillor.



#### **Facilities – Cllr Mark Wilson**

In regards to facilities, with extraordinary input from the office staff and Martin we have installed solar panels on both buildings, had a new boiler in the CC, had a number of challenges with the Klargestor at Foxfield's, we've seen fire doors replaced as required, we've had a change in caretaking staff, a twin storage setup installed at Foxfield's to house expanding grounds management equipment, and a number of facilities processes are due to be implemented thanks to Julie's hard work,



#### **Infrastructure and Planning – Cllr M Aluko**

Another busy year for the Grange Park Parish Council (GPPC) Infrastructure and Planning portfolio.

With construction work continuing on the west side of junction 15 for the Rail Freight/Warehouse development, we have provided a GPPC representation at periodic meetings held by the development team, SEGRO, to monitor progress. The meeting is also attended by Parish Councillors from Blisworth, Milton Malsor, Roade and Collingtree. Other attendees are National Highways and the construction company, Winvic along with our Local Parliament MP, Dame Andrea Leadsom.



As a Parish Council and as mentioned in the Chairman's submission, we have overseen repairs to Foxfield's footpaths and streetlights and solved issues such as those to the new Traffic light system at junction 15 of the M1 by using contacts in the SEGRO Team. We are regularly reporting county roads within the parish that require repairs to West Northants Council (WNC) on the FIXMYSTREET link and welcome parishioners to do the same by using the link below.

<http://www.fixmystreet.com>



## FixMyStreet

Report, view, and discuss local street-related problems.

[www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com)

### **H R Committee – Cllr P French**

The HR Committee meets regularly to discuss new starters, leavers, sickness, absence, and training development. Welcome to the new members joining our café bar, caretaking, and environments teams! We are completing our yearly appraisals, setting goals for the upcoming year. Additionally, we are developing a new staff handbook and rolling out new policies. A big thank you to Councillor Julie Bainbridge for all her time, effort and leading of this initiative!



This year, we have provided training in Health & Hygiene for Hospitality staff, CILCA for our Assistant Clerk, and a tree felling course along with a one-day chipper training course for the Environmental team. We have also scheduled a 'Flying Start Course' in June 2024 for our Councilors and staff. This course is essential for all new Councilors, aiming to provide comprehensive training on the roles and responsibilities within the Council, ensuring a confident and effective start to their careers.

The HR Committee, chaired by myself, Cllr Peter French, has full delegated authority and meets as needed. Other members include Cllrs M Smith, R Knott, M Wilson, and A Millerchip. To ensure Grange Park Parish Council adheres to employment law and upholds best practices in providing good working conditions for our staff, we engage the services of Personnel and Solutions Consultancy.

### **Youth Update – Cllr J Thompson**

Grange Park Youth Club, under the guidance of Lead Youth Club Leader Paul Woodbridge, has maintained its success. Sessions have been well planned, catering to a consistently large turnout over the past year, yet the group continues to thrive. The addition of new volunteers has helped with its effectiveness and being able to stay open on a weekly basis, with all contributions greatly appreciated.



As a Parish Council, we are committed to enhancing youth amenities within the community and eagerly seek input from local residents. Currently, we are exploring the possibility of establishing a small games area at Grange Valley Greenway. To ensure the facility meets the needs of our youth, we will actively be involving them in the design process. Their feedback and ideas are invaluable as we strive to create spaces that benefit all members of our community.