

Sarratt Parish Council



Annual Report

April 2026

Chair's Report *Lee Farman*

One of SPC's main roles is to help protect our rural environment as an enjoyable place to live and visit. With a busy and increasingly challenging year for Sarratt Parish I would like to thank our small but dedicated number of volunteers (including our Councillors) who have risen to meet this challenge. We would like to thank our very dedicated Clerk, Lena Mortimer who has kept SPC going, providing much value to the residents. We have also continued to strongly engage with our District and County Councillors on many issues and we thank you for your support, especially Cllr Ciaran Reed.

I took on the Chair in September from Sarah Dobson who moved out of the Parish. We are very grateful for the many years of service and leadership she gave SPC. We also recruited a new Councillor Philip Mitchell to take up the Environment and Sustainability portfolio. As Sarratt is so blessed with many natural assets, this is a large and time consuming brief. We had a gap in coverage of this role so we ask that all support him as he catches up with the long to do list.

The Sarratt Neighbourhood Plan (NP) completed its formal adoption process, including a referendum with 97% voting Yes, with an impressive 46% turnout. SPC thanks all parishioners who worked so enthusiastically to finalise the plan and secure a positive vote.

SPC has worked hard to represent parish views in Planning Matters, including applications, highways, public transport, rubbish, and fly tipping. Planning will continue to be a tough battle, and I hope everyone will unite to oppose applications that threaten the Village's character.

Highways Councillors David Zerny and Simon Diggins have forged strong contacts with Hertfordshire Highways and with the aim directing priorities and the small amount of County Council funds available toward Sarratt.

This year we completed the very successful restoration work at the Cricketers Pond successful. The pond is beautiful, attracting wildfowl and amphibians, and forming a peaceful and decorative signature feature in the Village. Thanks to Jo Deacon, John Tyler, and Justin Linnell for a fantastic job, funded in part by grants.

Sarratt now has four defibrillators for parishioners and walkers: at the Parish Office, KGV Playing Fields, The Old Forge (on the Green), and Holy Cross Church. This is very reassuring for the entire Village.

Through a helpful parishioner, SPC located Lady Stabb's family, whose donated the memorial bench opposite The Boot which had become irreparable. They chose to create a Green Memorial on the Green, planting a Rowan tree and a plaque.

You may have noticed increased filming on The Green and in the Post Office Stores. Sarratt has joined the Hertfordshire Film Hub, which will help gather revenue for village projects. Productions include California Avenue (comedy drama) and Village Idiot (Play for Today).

Events such as the Fair, Boxing Day cars and the high quality Music Festival continue to bring visitors and entertainment to Sarratt and SPC thanks everyone involved in these.

The Remembrance Service on The Green was particularly touching this year. A beautiful display was arranged at the memorial, the weather was kind, and with amplification we were able to enjoy the contribution of the children from Sarratt School. The horses were, as always, a welcome attraction.



With the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation, Parish Councils will become more important as the local interaction with new unitary authorities. So please join the Parish Council to do your bit. We have some vacancies and it is simpler than you think to be part of helping your community.

We are part way through revamping our communications, increasing ways to get information to and from our residents. Please use this link to enlist in the Village Email to regularly receive information <http://eepurl.com/iZ4fes>

Everyone can help by reporting to the Clerk fly tips, potholes, and anything unacceptable. Lena is always happy to help.

Website: sarrattparishcouncil.gov.uk
Agendas, minutes, policies, news available online.

Parish Office: Mon–Fri, 08:00–12:00

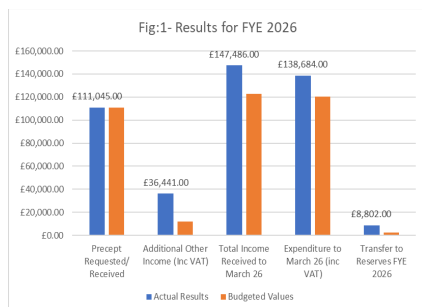
Contact: 01923 262025

clerk@sarrattparishcouncil.gov.uk

Financial Summary *Michael Lowry*

I have pleasure in reporting on the financial overview as part of the responsibilities of the Policy & Resources Lead for the Council.

Figure 1 (below) summarises the Council's initial outturn for the financial year 2025/26 ended 31 March 2026 (subject to external audit).



Overall expenditure was higher than budget, largely due to two main capital projects which the council has embarked upon this year. Firstly, was the renovation of the Cricketers pond where required significant maintenance had been postponed for several years. Secondly, the Council is also starting in combination with the KGV Trustees, the upgrade to the changing rooms to accommodate ladies changing facilities within KGV Pavillion (sponsored by discretionary CIL funds from TRDC). This additional expenditure was incurred through the engagement of professional building consultants to help with the building designs and necessary planning applications.

Fortunately, this additional expenditure has been offset for the Cricketers pond by additional grants received from the woodland management trust and additional revenue received from filming on the Green over the summer months. KGV Trustees have also covered the initial costs of engaging with the professional building consultants. I would like to extend my thanks to both Jo Deacon for her work in arranging

the Cricketers pond contractors and grants and to the KGV trustees for their donation towards the initial pavilion design costs.

Figure 2, (below) shows an analysis of the different categories where this year's budget was spent. These are like the year before, with Administration, Grants, Environment, Common Land and Green, accounting for the largest expenditure areas. This is to be expected to support the necessary administration and environmental activities of the Parish given its rural location.

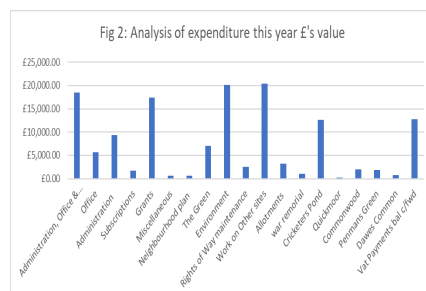
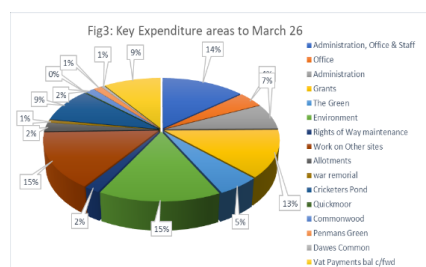


Figure 3, below shows the analysis of expenditures by percentage and can be seen are fairly evenly distributed.

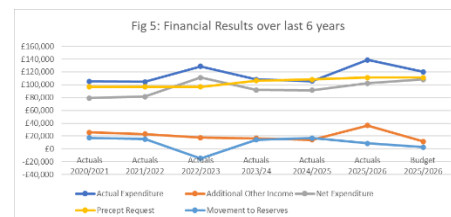


The second largest area of budget expenditure (overall £17,375,20% of budget) is providing grants to organisations and groups within the Parish. These groups exist to support individuals, promote leisure and social events and undertake work within the Parish.

When setting these grant allocations, the Parish Council is bound by Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, which sets an amount of £11.10 for 25/26 per parishioner, that the

Council can distribute as grants. The Council uses its own developed criteria for allocating these grants, while aiming to be as fair and equitable to the numerous requests received by organisations across the parish.

Figure 5 below, shows a summary trend in income and expenditure levels for the last six years that the Council has been experiencing. As can be seen, the Council seeks to align its precept request(s) with forecast expenditure maintaining sound financial stewardship by avoiding both budget shortfalls and the accumulation of excessive reserves. Last year, the Council made a small contribution to reserves of £8,000, which was income/ grants received over the additional expenditures.



This year's budgeting round FY26/27, the Council continued to align against its strategic five-year plan with Council Members reviewing the existing and future areas of expenditure for the immediate next year and subsequent four-years longer term. Council's review of planned expenditures next year, enabled a modest increase in next year's precept request for 2026/2027 of 1.5%.

I would like to thank the Chair, other Council Members, Clerk for their continued support in preparing and reviewing the monthly financial results, this year's annual budget and review of internal SPC policies available on the Parish Council website: <https://sarrattparishcouncil.gov.uk>

Planning *James Alder & Lee Farman*

It has been a very challenging year for planning in Sarratt.

As a result of a delayed District Council Local Plan and Government changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, Sarratt has been subjected to an excess of significant housing development applications, which in total would result in unsustainable overdevelopment of the Parish.



SPC put a lot of effort into trying to counter the original large, very well funded Burlington application. We have applied a lot of the learnings from that process to counter the recent applications.

Some of these have already been refused by TRDC with our help, but with very limited SPC resources and the significant changes to

planning policies by the Government, it is becoming increasingly difficult to get the right outcomes.

We very much encouraged by the recent increase in resident engagement on this subject, which is helping to provide additional funds and awareness to put additional pressure on policy and decision makers.

We will of course continue our efforts engaging with the District Council, County Council, MP and other authorities. If we all work together, we stand a chance of making a positive difference to the outcomes for Sarratt.

The Sarratt Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in November. Although it can not stop development it does provide some additional local controls that planners and developers have to consider, as well as access to additional Community Infrastructure Levy funds for local use. We would like to thank all those who helped get the plan completed and adopted, especially Ant Soothill and Mike Edmund, and for the strong support of Sarratt Parish residents.

We continue to have a good relationship with TRDC planning team. The majority of Sarratt Parish Council's recommendations on planning applications were subsequently endorsed by Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) as the Local Planning Authority. We have also seen TRDC add sensible conditions to some planning responses, many of which SPC provided input on.

Environment and Sustainability

Phil Mitchell

Since taking on the Environment & Sustainability brief in November 2025, work has progressed from initial induction into the remit to active delivery across tree safety, contractor governance, management planning, grants and community-facing work on The Green. The following summarises progress by theme.

Induction and stakeholder engagement

The first two months focused on building a working understanding of the role and its remit. Regular meetings were established with Cllr Flo Garvey (remit and tree matters), Jo Deacon (historical context and ongoing work) and Andrew Whitewood (contractor scope). Wider stakeholder links were opened with Andrew Taylor (HCC Countryside Management Service), the Sarratt Wildlife Group, Dawn Pitts and Brenda on Green-related matters, and Tim Hill (Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust) on strategic conservation. These relationships are now the operational backbone of the brief.

Management plans and policy

Both the Land Management Plan and Woodland Management Plan have been reviewed, with the LMP's approval status confirmed and gaps identified.

Contractor arrangements

Andrew Whitewood's Plan of Works for 2026, with associated costings, has been finalised and handed to Michael. Discussions are underway to formalise Andrew's position as a contracted contractor in line with Open Government guidelines, with a draft contract and schedule of works produced.

Tree safety

A Tree Safety Process has been developed for the Parish to apply whenever trees are raised as an issue. A full tree assessment across all woodlands is currently underway with Patrick Stileman, with the report received this week (April 20). The Safety Process will be rewritten once those findings are in.



Grants

A reference document covering grants available for trees, woodlands and land management in the Parish has been produced. It needs a designated owner to carry applications forward. Andrew Taylor

(HCC CMS) has also offered ongoing advice on woodland grant opportunities.

Strategic opportunities

Tim Hill flagged the Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy as materially relevant to the Parish. He has offered paid audits and plans to help Sarratt position itself to benefit. This warrants a closer review before any commitment.

Communications and website

A communications plan has been progressed and several social media management platforms trailed. Alternative approaches to the website and workplace tooling have been proposed, pending follow-up with Lee. Jo Deacon has separately pitched work on establishing and registering a filing portfolio.

The Green

Meetings with Brenda and Dawn Pitts surfaced three issues requiring follow-up: removal of daffodils that should never have been planted; including how such approvals are prevented in future; and a proposal to install a substantial information board so the community understands The Green's status as a protected wildlife site.

Immediate next steps

Priorities for the coming weeks are: receive Patrick Stileman's assessment and rewrite the Tree Safety Process; finalise Andrew Whitewood's contracted-contractor status; secure an owner for the grants document; complete the review of the Herts Local Nature Recovery Strategy; and resolve the three Green-related issues raised by Brenda and Dawn Pitts.

Highways *Simon Diggins & David Zerney*

With a change of political leadership at Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) following last May's elections, and the new Liberal Democrat administration's emphasis on prioritising fixing potholes, SPC has made a major effort to engage with Hertfordshire Highways.

In response to many parishioner complaints about the number and severity of potholes, poor response times when issues are reported, and also excessive HGV traffic on our roads, we wrote to Hertfordshire Highways setting out Sarratt Parish Council's view that there needs to be a fresh, strategic approach; one which uses local knowledge to shape longer-term priorities and for budget to be allocated accordingly while demonstrating the ability to be flexible where required.

SPC is in dialogue with our County Councillors and we are grateful to Councillor Louise Price for her proactive involvement on our behalf.

In February she arranged a meeting with a manager from Hertfordshire Highways. They confirmed that Highways operate to set procedures, and have access to live traffic data which is used for judging when maintenance is required. The number of public highway defect reports feeds into this, and we therefore encourage parishioners to report issues such as potholes via www.hertfordshire.gov.uk

We have been advised that most county councils use a similar Defect Management system to the one operated by HCC; and by 12th March, Highways had addressed 12,000 potholes since the start of the year, a 47% increase on the same period in 2025 due to the wet weather. The works programme for the coming year has a budget of £107m, up from £100m last year, with a further £30m for day to day repairs and maintenance.

In answer to some of the points raised by parishioners:

- Highways also fix nearby defects if a pothole is reported; it's why you may see large areas of patching on our roads. Resurfacing is hugely expensive, so patching is done to extend the life of the current surface for as long as possible.
- The reason for Bottom Lane being resurfaced ahead of busier routes was to avoid incurring greater repair costs later. Filling cracks in the surface was done to make the surface last longer.

We are liaising with Councillor Price about the priorities that matter to residents:

- To intervene where specific roads need maintenance and get them onto the schedule. For example, repairs to North Hill are scheduled this year, and we are asking that Bucks Hill is addressed.
- For a 20mph limit on the access road at Sarratt Green given the location of the school, parked cars and narrowness of the road.
- For pothole repairs to be fixed quickly, and for there to be clear communication from Herts Highways about the status of work scheduling once reported.

We note the proposed changes to local government structures. We don't know yet what this might mean for highways but will ensure that Sarratt's priorities and needs are understood in any new arrangements.