

# **Annual Report 2024**

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**MARCH 2024**

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**Charlbury Town Council**



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## Message from the Chair of the Town Council

We are rapidly approaching the end of the term for the current council with elections on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2024 looming. It has been an exciting period for this current council with many members new to the Town Council to complement the existing longer serving members. During the last 3 years we have employed a new Town Clerk in Lisa Wilkinson, moved to modern online accounting practices, revamped the Town Council website and completely updated all of our documents and procedures.

As the 12 volunteer councillors, we have striven to complete all of our statutory and routine duties to the best of our abilities, providing continuity of service whilst also delivering best value for money for the residents of Charlbury.

In addition, we have completed many other projects outside of the Town Council's normal scope and are excited to continue this important work into the future. Projects have involved environmental and biodiversity matters, traffic management, the new town market, Walkers are Welcome and many others.

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As Chair of the Town Council, I would like to personally thank all of the non-councillor volunteers that have helped make all this happen.

My biggest plea as we approach the next Town Council election in May is to encourage as many people as possible to stand for election and also to vote so that you can join us in trying to make Charlbury the best that it can be.

## Town Council work over the past 12 months

### Traffic



#### Speeding

The year has seen a number of positive steps to make roads safer in Charlbury. We were pleased to receive a second SID speed measuring device courtesy of Cllr Leffman's Councillor Priority Fund. This SID will give us reliable data on traffic speeds which we can use to plan a way forward on speeding around the town. It joins a lower-tech SID that you will have seen around town over the past year or two. Speeding remains a big concern in the town and more work is needed to reduce speeds.

Recent speed data has shown that 69% of the 26,521 vehicles that passed Charlbury School and Charlbury Pre-School were breaking the speed limit and 59% of vehicles on Nine Acres Lane were breaking the speed limit. The SIDs have recorded disturbingly high speeds in Charlbury over the past few months, including a few doing more than twice the legal limit. To combat this scourge, the new Charlbury Speedwatch Co-Ordinator is looking for volunteers to help run Speedwatch sessions using police-approved speed gun technology to clock individual speeders, with police follow-up. If you would like to help, please contact the Town Clerk or email the Speedwatch Co-Ordinator at [cswcharlbury@outlook.com](mailto:cswcharlbury@outlook.com).

#### Parking

Concern about parking in the town centre led to us starting a formal discussion in the town; our committee meeting in January was attended by numerous members of the public. Following this, the Town Council has set up a working group and is now working with residents, OCC, West Oxfordshire District Council, business owners and community organisations to come up with proposals to improve the situation. An initial survey of residents in the areas mainly affected is underway.

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## Journeys



### Safer streets

We are happy to see that the new crossing across the Slade that we (you) funded is working well. This year we will be consulting residents on their views about a range of measures across the whole town aimed at making it easier and safer to walk and cycle around Charlbury (known as a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)): watch this space!

The build-out on Banbury Hill, installed in 2022, has made a big difference to the speeds at which vehicles now enter the town from the Enstone direction.

### Buses

The Journeys team has produced a new bus map showing where the buses stop and where they go to. We have attached maps to all the bus stops and bus shelters so hopefully more of us will be tempted to take the bus for easy journeys to Chipping Norton, Witney, Woodstock and (now the trains are sadly so unreliable) even Oxford. Remember that the government has introduced a flat £2 fare for single journeys anywhere in the country.

## Walkers are Welcome

Charlbury was given Walkers Are Welcome status in 2013. Walkers are Welcome is a national organisation which promotes walking and highlights walking centres for people to visit and experience local walks. There was initially strong support for this in the town and several walks were organised every year. However, interest has fallen off since lockdown and there has been very little activity.

The Town Council agreed that it would be appropriate to relaunch Walkers are Welcome in Charlbury in 2024 and several initiatives are taking place, as part of the Council's commitment to the promotion of active travel and to support sustainable tourism, both of which are addressed in the Charlbury Neighbourhood Plan. This



initiative also fits in with the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plan that the Town Council is currently working on with OCC. The recent expansion of hospitality provision within Charlbury also makes this an ideal time for this relaunch, offering a wide range of options to visiting walkers and crucially providing a focus for local businesses to attract customers. Since originally being given WAW status Charlbury was also recognised as a Cotswold Gateway Town in 2019 with two new short circular walks set up. These will be added to the six original walks along with a revised town trail highlighting attractions and history of the town.

The initial relaunch is being planned for the start of the walking season and will include a publicised walk event.

To coincide with the relaunch, we are publishing two new leaflets on the Gateway Walks and an updated Town Trail leaflet. We will also update the current walks map displayed at the Co-op to include QR code links for information. Revised leaflets will be produced including estimated time and difficulty of walks.



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Further improvements to existing walks are planned to include more way markers along the routes, QR codes linking to further information, new information boards and improvement of some of the surfaces. It is also hoped to provide seats on some of the walks.

Funding will obviously be required for this work and a grant application is being made under the Caring for the Cotswolds scheme from the Cotswolds National Landscape. We are also working with the Market Towns Officer at West Oxfordshire District Council to explore possible funding under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Looking further ahead we hope to do more including working with local businesses and walking groups to promote and provide facilities for walkers. The second phase will involve more outreach activities in particular working with local hostellers who can provide facilities for walkers – for example provision of packed lunches and onward transport of luggage for walkers.

## Planning

The Town Council is a consultee on all planning applications within the parish of Charlbury and as such, submits comments on those applications to West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC). As the local planning authority, it is WODC that ultimately approves or refuses them.

The Town Council's Planning Committee meets monthly to consider and to respond to WODC on behalf of the Town Council in respect of new planning applications relating to the parish. During the year 2023/24, the planning committee considered 58 applications. The planning committee has also considered two applications for premises licences as a consultee.

This year the town council has been disappointed to see an increase in the number of retrospective planning applications submitted locally meaning that work has been carried out without the prior scrutiny of the planning system. This is of particular concern where applications impact the historic town centre.

Meetings of the planning committee are open to members of the public as observers, and we were pleased to welcome the public to well over half of these meetings. Public time is also included within all planning meetings during which members of the public can address committee members regarding current applications and related issues by prior arrangement with the town clerk. At the time of writing, 14 such requests had been granted within the year and we are always pleased to engage with residents and applicants alike in this way.

Since the adoption of Charlbury's Neighbourhood Plan (CNP) in June 2021, the Town Council's planning committee has paid particular attention to matters addressed by policies and objectives within that plan when commenting on applications. Revisions to the CNP will be necessary in coming years. This revision, which will involve extensive consultation with the community, will need to be a priority task for the next council. As a first step, the town council is currently updating the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (an appendix to the CNP) which lists aspirations for local infrastructure projects towards which developer contributions may be sought from potential new developments.

During the year, the Town Council has also taken an active role in consultations with WODC on the preparation of its new Local Plan and it will be vitally important for us to continue with this engagement as the Local Plan progresses.

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## Ticknell Piece Playpark and Skatepark

The skatepark has come to life this past year, beginning with the Town Council's skateboard workshops in April with the truly inspiring Tom from Tictac Skateboarding. Since then, local coach Mario Santos has run regular sessions at the skatepark, and Liam Flaxman has been bringing in experienced skaters from around the local area, which is great for the newer skateboarders to see. Mario, Liam and our Duke of Edinburgh volunteer Jack, have been putting in lots of work to tackle litter in the park with great results. Ticknell play park has been kept in generally excellent condition, thanks to everyone for taking litter home. The wildflower patch is getting established and had some lovely flowers last summer. We are replacing the gate springs but please try to shut gates behind you to keep dogs out.

We have invested in the skatepark by making repairs to the surface and carrying out a major cut of the overgrown hedges to improve safety and visibility, in line with best practice safety guidelines. The hedge looks bare at present but will soon grow back, and all mature trees have been preserved. Volunteers, at our now annual clean-up day, have helped keep the whole area looking great by picking litter, cutting back thorns and brambles and painting the goal posts.



## Land & Nature Group

The Land & Nature Group (LNG) has continued to be active over the year, holding monthly meetings to discuss strategy and projects. On a landscape scale, the LNG has finalised the mapping of 'natural assets' (habitats of importance for wildlife including woodland, wetlands, hedgerows etc.) within the parish. The hedgerow survey, butterfly/bird counts and river fly monitoring also continued throughout the year. These data were used as baseline for the Nature Recovery Framework (NRF), which was presented to the Town Council on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and approved as a draft subject to consultation with residents and landowners/managers. It is anticipated that the NRF will contribute towards the county-level Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

At a local scale on land to which LNG has direct access (owned by the Town Council or other collaborating organisation, e.g. Thames Water at Wigwell), the LNG has been active with meadow restoration (Mill Field), tree planting (Bowls Club) and the management/restoration of roadside verges and contributed towards the emerging management plan for the Mill Field.

Over the year, a number of meetings were organised to discuss collaboration and to promote the work of the LNG; for example, with Blenheim Estate, The Northeast Cotswold Farm Cluster, Cornbury Estate, the Evenlode Catchment Partnership and Wychwood Forest Trust. These meetings and other face-to-face interviews with land managers etc., will provide a useful summary of the wide-ranging conservation initiatives within the parish. The LNG also had a strong presence with poster displays at other outreach activities including at the Community Action Group (CAG) one-day event at Botley in Oxford, the Earth Day (Evenlode Catchment Partnership) at Wigwell, Charlbury Street Fair and the Riverside Festival. The Riverside Festival saw the start of

the LNG campaign to engage members of the public in a consultation to ask them about their views on nature recovery across the parish, which will continue into the coming year.

## Charlbury Market

Last year, saw the first full season of the Charlbury Community market.

This is the Town Council's initiative to provide a local food market on Saturday mornings, with a small collection of stalls selling locally grown and locally prepared food. It supports local businesses; enabling people to buy a range of locally-produced good quality food in one place; bringing more footfall to the town centre on a regular basis; creating a friendly, social and accessible event. The market soon had its regular stallholders and regular shoppers, creating an amazing community buzz outside the community centre.



The market will return this May and we look forward to a greater variety of stalls, including a regular meat stall (which was the most requested stall last year).

We continue to look for a market co-ordinator to run the market (with support from the town clerk) and to develop it within the Town Council's vision.

## Accounts

After careful consideration, Charlbury Town Council has increased the precept (the amount collected from residents to fund local work) by 11.45% for the year 2024-2025 - equivalent to £10.79 per annum per Band D household. This has been done for two reasons: the external auditors have requested that we increase our reserves; and the field at Nine Acres is in desperate need of remedial work, which needs to be carried out every year for the next five years.

Charlbury Town Council's income for the financial year 2023-2024 was £153,619. This income consisted of the 'precept' supported by the usual income from the allotments and the cemetery. Three grants were received; for a fish pass feasibility study at Mill Field; from Sustainable Charlbury for meadow restoration work, also at Mill Field; and for a speed indicator device from OCC.

Expenditure this year (2023-2024) focused on town maintenance, administration, grants to local organisations, the zebra crossing, grass cutting and loan repayments (for the extension to the cemetery, the extension to the sports pavillion and for works to the community centre). Total expenditure so far this year is £129,226.

On 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024, Charlbury Town Council's bank accounts held £73,786. Rent to OCC for Ticknell Piece playground and some town maintenance work is still outstanding.

Draft accounts are below:	£
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>
Precept	128,352
Burials/Memorials	7,090
Grants received	7,723
Other Income	1,131
VAT repayment	9,323
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>153,619</b>

## EXPENDITURE

Administration	39,432
Grants	19,613
Town Maintenance	16,739
Loan Repayments	16,455
Zebra crossing	15,000
Speedwatch	3,117
Grass/hedge cutting	13,695
Other	5,175
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>129,226</b>

Balance at 1/4/2023	56,383
Add Total Income	153,619
Less Total Expenditure	136,216
<b>Balance at 29 February</b>	<b>73,786</b>



## Engaging with the community

The council has been working hard to deliver all its aims to support the community and town and also addressing the biodiversity and climate crises. So, it's especially important that we keep residents informed of all the progress we are making – and checking that residents are both aware of what we are doing and able to comment on our activities.

We do this in several ways. When we are working with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) on roads, traffic and parking matters, this can lead to a formal consultation exercise in which all are invited to participate. These have included changes to yellow-lining, and the zebra crossing. Look out for the next one which will follow the publication of the proposed Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). It will make suggestions for several changes to the journeys infrastructure to encourage more cycling and walking around town.

We also publicise our work on the town council website, Charlbury.info, noticeboards and its social media sites so sign up to #charlburytowncouncil to keep up to date.

Later this month we will be delivering a survey about the town council to every household to establish their satisfaction with the council's performance and to ask for suggestions about further work that people might like to see the new council to undertake. Elections in May!

A new website is almost ready to launch. Not just cleaner and clearer – there will be lots of real-time data – Charlbury in numbers. Water levels on the Evenlode, Southill Solar electricity generation, air quality....

And finally, if you want to be kept up to date, sign up for Charlbury Alerts at <https://charlbury-tc.gov.uk/welcome-to-charlbury-alerts/>

## Report from Oxfordshire County Council



The administration in Oxfordshire is now in its third year. In October 2023, the Fair Deal Alliance between the Lib Dem/Green group and the Labour group broke down. The break followed a very poor report from Ofsted

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regarding the services provided by the council for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). As Leader of the Council, I believed that we needed a complete change in the way that we managed this, but Labour did not agree, hence their decision to break up the Alliance. The County Council now has a minority Lib Dem/Green administration, and we continue to work closely with officers to deliver the priorities that we agreed at the beginning of the administration, with tackling the climate emergency at the heart of all that we do. The budget was agreed in February, and we included in that budget a number of amendments that were proposed by the Labour group.

A new SEND Improvement Board has been set up and we now have a Cabinet member for SEND improvement. The introduction of the 20mph speed limit around the county is almost complete, and while there are some people who have objected, the majority of people, especially in Charlbury and the surrounding villages, are really pleased with the new lower speed limits. We are progressing work on the traffic filters in Oxford, and these are scheduled to come into operation as soon as the work at the station in Oxford is completed. I was recently present at the launch of the 150 electric buses which are coming into operation in Oxford and nearby. We are also progressing Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) including one in Charlbury. Work is progressing on the Windrush HGV study – this is one of two studies, the other being in the Henley area, and covers Charlbury and the surrounding villages. This is being conducted following the plan to remove the HGV ban on Burford bridge, so we can find out more about the routes HGVs are taking in the area before creating a new strategy for the county.

Perhaps the most visible work of the County Council in the town has been the recent introduction of the zebra crossing on The Slade. This was jointly funded between the Town Council and OCC. The school's Lollipop Lady is now using the crossing each day and I have had positive comments from a number of residents who find the new crossing very reassuring.

I am frequently asked when the road at Fiveways leading to Cornbury will be re-surfaced and I am pleased to say that this is on the schedule for the new financial year.

Finally, I am a member of the North Cotswold Line Task Force, and we are progressing a business case for improvements to the line, including dualling it along its entire length. Robert Courts is organising a meeting with the Minister for Rail, Hugh Merriman, which I will attend shortly together with the Leader of Worcestershire County Council to discuss future plans for the line. I have also been in conversation with GWR about the parking issues at the station, which they are aware of but at present have no plans to resolve, but we will continue to press for a solution.

*Liz Leffman County Councillor*



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# Charities & Committees in Charlbury

## Nine Acres Recreation Ground

The Nine Acres recreation field, (which is just over 7 acres) is the town's largest recreational asset and is managed for the town council, by a group of volunteers, principally made up by users of the area, known as the Nine Acres Management Committee (NAMC). The committee meets at the sports pavilion normally on the second Tuesday, every two months. If any member of the community has any concerns or recommendations to be considered by the committee, please feel free to e-mail [pauldarrenjenkins@gmail.com](mailto:pauldarrenjenkins@gmail.com). As with all volunteer groups, new members are always welcome!

## Football Pitches and Playing Areas

The two principal pitches have improved dramatically over the last two years through the hard work of John Fitzgerald and his team who regularly use the equipment bought last year for approximately £26,000. Works include regular cutting, rolling, scarification and raking. This has led to a significant reduction in cost for the general maintenance of the areas as many of these hours are given freely.



However, the underlying condition of the pitches is not so good. There are numerous areas where stone is just below the surface and if not removed will have a severe impact on the ability of football teams to play on these pitches over the medium to long term. NAMC is working with the town council to implement a detailed rectification programme that will run over the next five years with most areas of the pitches, undergoing digging out of stone, replacing existing and adding further topsoil, and then embarking on a regular programme of reseeding, fertilisation and aeration. The budgetary amounts are anticipated to be approximately £10,000 per annum for the next five years. A big project but future proofing the pitches for many years to come!!

## The Tennis Courts and Club

The Tennis Club continues to thrive. The last year saw the resurfacing of courts 1 & 2 to a much higher quality surface, at a cost of £45,000. The project was driven by the tennis club. Additional projects include potentially replacing the existing floodlights with a more sustainable LED system.

Courts 3 & 4 will always remain as more multifunctional, and therefore use a harder surface allowing other uses such as basketball to be played.

However, sadly, leaves from overhanging trees outside NAMC's control still cause difficulties and disruption to the courts and their use.

## Pavillion

The pavillion is generally in good repair and well used, with only minor decoration carried out over the last year.

## Play Area

New equipment was installed in 2022/3 and the equipment is generally in good condition but does require regular maintenance. We still get minor occurrences of misuse of the equipment and seating benches. Any new ideas (including funding!) welcome!!

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## Dog mess and bins

On a more negative note, we often get complaints about the dog mess being left in various areas of the recreation ground and the bins overflowing, especially during the summer. In many ways there is little that the existing committee can do about these items, and we require the community to respect the amazing facility that we have.

We have considered removing the ability for dog walkers to use the recreation ground, but we see this as an action of last resort. We do, however, along with the Town Council, continue to monitor the situation. Everyone can help by making sure that dog walkers that use the facility ensure that their dog is on the lead and that any mess is immediately removed!!

Regarding the bins where they are overflowing simply take the waste home! Adding extra bins will not solve the problem!!

## A final note of thanks

The committee meetings are generally well attended, and we are delighted to welcome 2 new members over the last 12 months!! However, after many years' service, Clarrie Haynes has decided to step down as treasurer and his duties have now been passed onto Nick Bancroft. Clarrie will remain on the committee, but we are all extremely grateful for the diligence and practical approaches that Clarrie has displayed, offered and implemented over the years.

Finally, if you feel that you can help in any way with the management of the Town's principal asset, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. All help is welcome!!

*Paul Jenkins Chair*

## The Thomas Gifford Trust (TGT)



The Thomas Gifford Trust owns and manages the Charlbury Community Centre, which has continued to be a hive of activity in the last year, with the continuation of existing activities and some new ones, catering to all from babies to seniors.

Regular sessions include Pickleball every weekday, as well as weekly sessions of table tennis, badminton, walking football and netball. We offer circuit training 3 times a week, line dancing twice a week and host regular Pilates and yoga classes both daytime and evening. The youth basketball sessions are still going strong, and we have now started adult basketball. There is a very popular Fitness for Seniors class every Tuesday afternoon aimed at improving strength, balance and flexibility – crucially important as we age - which caters to people with all levels of fitness. Details of all these sessions and more can be found on our website, or just by calling in and asking our ever-helpful staff.

For younger children we had Kids' Runarounds in the sports hall, with over 60 children at times. It's amazing how much fun can be had with just a few mats, balls and hoops and the space to run and play freely. While Runaround is now paused for the spring and summer, Jason's Toddler Gym continues every Wednesday morning, as does the singing and music session for babies and toddlers. During holidays there have been Art Clubs, with sessions for younger and older primary-age children.

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Every Friday morning is TG's Café Coffee Club, a place for retired people to meet and catch up, free to attend with a very reasonably priced cup of tea or coffee. We have also restarted Scrabble sessions on Monday afternoons, and have hosted an extremely popular Art History series, with the theme of Women in Art.

Every Friday evening during term-time, 7-9 pm, we hold a Youth Club for young people of secondary school age. It only costs a pound, and the whole sports hall is available to play a mixture of sports.

In the last year, much of the trustees' time and energy has been focused on the new gym extension, to be built in front of the Community Centre. We have secured planning permission for this and have engaged a professional team to work up plans and costings. This will provide a permanent home for our busy pop-up gym. We will need to raise substantial funds for the build, but everyone in the town who missed out on the chance to 'buy a brick' for the building of the Community Centre will have the opportunity to contribute to this exciting new development.

In the last year the new Charlbury Community Workshop has been built on the plot of land between the sports hall and the Doctors. The building is owned by The Thomas Gifford Trust and was built and fitted out with grant funding from, amongst others, the Glasgow Foundation, the Town Council, Sustainable Charlbury, the Beer Festival, Blenheim Palace and Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action. The Community Workshop is now set up as a separate charity with a separate group of trustees, although there is crossover with TGT trustees. At the moment, there are regular sessions on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. There is one area for woodwork, with a fine array of tools that have been donated, and a separate area for materials, with sewing machines and an overlocker. Skilled and enthusiastic members will either repair something for you or show you how to do it.

As always, the Community Centre could not do what it does without our fantastic staff and volunteers. The Building Committee sorts out all the maintenance for the building and fixes anything that needs fixing (well at least nearly everything). There is a group of regular volunteers who staff the front desk and the café. We also have volunteers to help run youth club and staff the Pimms stall at Beer Festival and are always looking for more people to join our happy band of volunteers. Jason and Daniela continue to be at the heart of so much of what we do, and we have a great bunch of people with a variety of skills and backgrounds acting as trustees. After 10 years involved with the Community Centre, first chairing the fundraising committee and then as a trustee, Tanya Stevenson has recently stepped down as a trustee and it is appropriate to recognise the huge amount of time and energy that she had contributed over the years, in so many different ways, to the Community Centre.

One of the initiatives that we are taking forward, together with other groups in Charlbury, is to develop what is available for the local teenagers. There is an amazing array of things to do in Charlbury for young children, but once you reach secondary school age there is much less to do. We are therefore looking to secure funding for the appointment of an adult (probably in their 20's) as a Youth Ambassador to engage with our young people. The Youth Ambassador would run Friday Youth Club but will also have a much wider role in the town coordinating other activities for teenagers and exploring ideas and opportunities to keep our young people busy and safe.

The Thomas Gifford Trust also owns and manages The Playing Close. The maintenance of this is funded by public monies (from the Town Council) and so The Playing Close is available for any local charity to use without charge.

For information about any of our sports sessions, exercise classes, weekly social meetings and to keep up-to-date, please visit our website – [www.charlburycommunitycentre.org](http://www.charlburycommunitycentre.org) And if you have any

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ideas for collaborations between the Community Centre and any other local group you're involved in, or you want to explore the idea of offering a class in our TG Room or a session in our sports hall, just let us know. Please get in touch with Daniela Jenkins: [info@charburycommunitycentre.org.uk](mailto:info@charburycommunitycentre.org.uk)

*Chris Potts, Chair*



The Charlbury Community Workshop (CCW) has been established as an Association Charitable Incorporated Organisation, and so has members (like a club) who elect the trustees. The CIO was registered on 30 March 2023. The 9 initial trustees are all members of the working group formed in June 2022 which got the project up and running.

The CCW has been set up to provide an affordable facility for repairing, making and training in a variety of practical crafts, in particular woodworking, and needlecraft. The workshop is opened on prearranged mornings and afternoons, with supervision by coordinators experienced in the safe use of the equipment. The CCW will also run courses on practical topics of general interest such as bicycle maintenance.

The CCW is housed in a purpose-built workshop, a sturdy steel structure on a concrete base, next to the Community Centre. Much of the construction work and the fitting out has been carried out by members of the working group and other volunteers.

The workshop is 9m by 5m, divided into two separate workspaces, one for fabric/materials, with sewing machines and an overlocker, and the other for woodworking and other crafts, with benches and various power tools (drills and lathes) and hand tools (chisels, saws, files, hammers) which have all been donated.

The CCW began running regular sessions from October 2023. The current opening times are: -

Tuesdays	9.00 am - 12.30 pm (both craft and woodwork rooms)
Wednesdays	10.00 am - midday (craft)
Thursdays	2.00 pm - 4.00 pm (woodwork)

The CCW already has over 40 members and is looking at ways of reaching out to more local people, including by offering a repair service for small items.

The Thomas Gifford Trust, which owns the Charlbury Community Centre, made the land available and contributed substantial initial funding for the construction of the building on that land. Funding for the building and the fitting out has also been received from The Glasgow Foundation, Sustainable Charlbury, Blenheim Palace, West Oxfordshire District Council, Charlbury Town Council, Charlbury Beer Festival, and private donations. CCW now pays a modest rent to The Thomas Gifford Trust.

Funding for ongoing operations comes from a mixture of annual membership fees (£25 a year), session fees (£1 a session), special fund-raising events and the sale of items made at the workshop (such as bird boxes and hedgehog houses). There are no staff costs as everyone volunteers their time.

Thanks to the dedicated work of the trustees and members, the workshop has been built, fitted out and stocked with tools in a relatively short time. It provides a venue for people to develop practical skills and will provide a useful repair service to the local community.

*Chris Potts, Chair*



The Memorial Hall continues as an essential local venue for concerts and public events, and for recreational activities. The space is made available for hire to local organisations and clubs and to individuals. As well as the main hall which includes a stage, the building also contains a light and airy meeting room at the rear plus a large lounge equipped with easy chairs, which opens up to an outdoor terrace and is also adjacent to a professional standard kitchen.

Embracing the hall is “the People’s Garden” to be freely enjoyed by all. The garden is maintained by Charlbury Garden Society.

The Corner House next door was donated to the town for community benefit. It houses a social food exchange called Cornerstone, an art room for local artists and creators, and a significant second-hand bookshop. Also in the building is the head office of Global Healthcare Information Network, a Charlbury charity with global reach. Alongside the main house is Charlbury Museum.

The whole estate is managed for the benefit of the people of Charlbury by a group of trustees, organised as a Charitable Incorporated Organization. The trustees have plans to improve the interior of the Corner House, which is a listed building, and hopes to obtain planning permission for a number of developments to help make the building work better for the town.

*Roy Scott, chairman of the trustees*

## Charlbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee

CCAAC was set up at the instigation of WODC to act as a local advisory committee to the Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee on all planning applications which affect the Charlbury Conservation Area. Its purpose is not only to consider planning applications but also to advise on all steps to maintain, improve and enhance the character and appearance of the Charlbury Conservation Area. Charlbury is lucky to have the only such committee in West Oxfordshire, and the local knowledge and some expertise presented at our meetings must be very helpful to the Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee.

The committee must have two serving West Oxfordshire District Councillors, two serving Charlbury Town Councillors, and one person elected by the Annual Parish Meeting.

Present members of the committee and their attendances are:

Reg James (Chair) – co-opted (9)  
Sarah Potter – (Vice Chair) – Charlbury Society representative (7)  
James Williams – co-opted (2)  
Juliet West – (Secretary) – co-opted (12)  
Andrew Graham (WODC representative) (0)  
Liz Leffman (WODC representative) (1)  
Councillor Tony Merry (Town Councillor)  
Dan Raymond-Barker (co-opted after resignation from town council) (2)  
Nicolette Lethbridge – Elected at the Parish Meeting (8)  
Sue Wooley – Charlbury Art Society representative (11)  
Diana Gold – co-opted (4)



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Peter Smith – co-opted (5)

The committee meets each month and in the last year 64 planning applications in or relating to Charlbury were inspected and commented on to WODC if thought necessary. On the committee are two architects, several conservation experts, two artists and others with real local knowledge.

We meet in the Green Room usually on the last Thursday of each month. We no longer have paper plans, so Tony Merry kindly downloads the planning application details and displays them on the wall with his laptop and projector. We are very grateful to Tony for doing this, but now that there is WiFi available in the Memorial Hall, members can bring their own devices to see the planning applications during the meeting.

We have repeatedly tried to make sure that our comments are placed on the WODC website with the applications, but it seems that this does not always happen.

*Reg James April 2024*

## **Charlbury Exhibition Foundation**

We are pleased to report that work to improve the energy efficiency of the Old Grammar School has continued during 2023 and that the bulk of the work identified as necessary and planned for has been completed.

Following the installation of secondary double glazing to the windows in early 2023 for which a grant was given by SusCha, it became necessary to consider replacing the gas heaters which were nearing the end of their life. The heater in the cloakroom was replaced with the help of a grant from the Charlbury Beer Festival. The heaters in the classroom area were replaced early this year with the Trust bearing this cost. We have also recently been successful in obtaining a bursary from Wilderness.

Our current plan is to replace the fluorescent lighting with LED lighting and to replace the hot water tank with a tank that is more efficient and economical in terms of usage requirements. This work will complete the key improvements that we identified as necessary to make the building more energy efficient and more user friendly for our tenants, Charlbury Pre School. The age and increasing unreliability of the heaters coupled with the significant increase in energy prices resulted in a challenging level of costs for Pre School, our long-term tenants, and we have worked with them to manage these costs.

The Trustees therefore made a decision that they were not in a position to make grants in autumn 2023. The position is being kept under review and will be considered over the coming months.

*Janet Burroughs, Chair of the Trustees, Charlbury Exhibition Foundation*