

EASTLEACH PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting Held on Tuesday 14th April 2026 at 6.30pm in the Village Hall, Eastleach

In attendance: Cllr Tim Jeans (Chair), Cllr Jane Fenton, Cllr Julia McLellan, Cllr Richard Ebsworth, District Cllr David Fowles, Catherine Morgan (Clerk), Crime Prevention Officer and local community PCSO in addition to approximately 25 members of the public.

1. Welcome

Eastleach Parish Council Chair, Cllr Tim Jeans, thanked everyone for coming.

2. Apologies for Absence from Councillors

Apologies were received from Cllr Fiona Jacovides.

3. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2025

Minutes were approved and signed by Cllr Jeans.

4. Presentation by PCSO & on crime in the local area and how to keep ourselves and property safe

Zee Bubul PCSO presented on the local Neighbourhood Policing Team, which covers the South Cotswolds (including Fairford, Lechlade and surrounding parishes such as Eastleach). The team comprises Police Officers and PCSOs, working with partner agencies such as social services. PCSO Bubul and PC Harry MacPherson are the primary contacts for local concerns, with an emphasis on crime prevention.

<https://www.gloucestershire.police.uk/area/your-area/gloucestershire/cotswolds/fairford-and-lechlade/on-the-team/top-reported-crimes-in-this-area>

Crime levels in Eastleach remain low compared to nearby towns. In Apr 2024-25 there were no residential burglaries (1 previously), one non-dwelling burglary (1), two thefts from vehicles (3), and no vehicle thefts (1). Lack of preventative measures is a common factor in opportunistic crime.

Residents were advised to report non-emergencies via 101, the police website, local officers, or anonymously via Crimestoppers, in addition to informing the Parish Council.

David McFarlane (Crime Prevention Officer, Gloucestershire) outlined current burglary trends and prevention:

Targets commonly include jewellery, car keys and silver.

Offenders often check the front door, then enter via the rear and head to the main bedroom.

Key advice: secure valuables, use safes, and consider Faraday boxes for car keys.

Prevention measures discussed:

- Doorbell cameras, burglar alarms and CCTV (now widely available and affordable).
- Dusk-to-dawn external lighting.
- Shed/garage alarms.
- Property marking systems (e.g. SmartWater or SelectaDNA).
- Displaying signage indicating CCTV/alarm systems.

Legal points noted:

- CCTV signage should be displayed; recording in public areas is permitted but not into neighbouring properties.
- Deterrents such as approved fence toppings are allowed, but anything likely to cause injury is not.

Residents were also encouraged to sign up to local community alerts:
<https://www.yourcommunityalerts.co.uk/>

5. Report from the EPC Chair on work undertaken by EPC recorded on the Parish Plan

The Chair reported that the most significant change this year has been the proposed local government reorganisation. As a result, Cotswold District Council is currently under-resourced in advance of its anticipated dissolution.

Members of the public were reminded that they may contact the Parish Council via the Clerk, clerk@eastleachparishcouncil.org, who will share correspondence with councillors for consideration and response as appropriate.

Potholes have been a particular issue this year. The Parish Council has adopted a joint approach with Southrop Parish Council and has made some progress with Oxfordshire County Council, including establishing a direct contact. However, a number of reported potholes remain outstanding, with some marked for over a month and over 15,000 reports still listed on Oxfordshire FixMyStreet.

The Council has continued engagement with key stakeholders, including the Ernest Cook Trust (ECT), and has made good progress in developing a constructive working relationship. Property updates noted: No. 29 has been sold and No. 34 is under offer; no further properties are currently planned for sale. A village walkabout with ECT was undertaken by Cllr Jacovides and Cllr McLellan.

Work on affordable housing continues in partnership with GRCC, focusing on identifying a suitable housing partner and potential sites. This remains ongoing.

Routine Parish Council responsibilities continue, including grass cutting, tree management and playground maintenance.

The Chair thanked the Clerk and fellow councillors for their work over the past year and for their collaborative approach. Thanks were also extended to members of the public for their engagement and support, with a reminder of the importance of volunteering within the parish.

6. Eastleach Parish Council Financial Report

For the financial year just gone, 2025-2026, the income for the Parish Council predominantly came from the precept, which is the proportion of your council tax bill set

by the Parish Council, which totalled £17,196. This was used for wood chippings for the playground, mowing of the Village Greens & playing field, a tree survey, treework including pollarding of the willow tree, staffing costs, new goal posts, a ROSPA inspection of the playground, replacement defibrillator pads, insurance, auditing services, IT services, use of the Village Hall and training for the Clerk and the Councillors.

Additionally, the Parish Council received £2,500 from the Ernest Cook Trust towards the cost of grass cutting, £1,100 in grant funding towards the replacement of the bark chippings in the playground and £395 generously donated by a member of the public for the new bench overlooking St Michael's & St Martin's Church.

In the coming year the Parish Council has budgeted for all ongoing operational costs in addition to specific asset management, including the refurbishment of all existing benches and margin for replacement where necessary and the refurbishment of the handrails on the twittens.

The Parish Council is audited every year on its financial management, governance, and accounting practices, which is currently underway. At the end of that process, the PC has a statutory obligation to publish all of its financial and governance information on its website. So for more information from mid-June you will be able to find all of this year's data on the Parish Council website. <https://eastleachparishcouncil.org/>

7. Report from Eastleach Village Hall Committee

Rob Clegg reported that the cost of running the Village Hall was £8,000 last year and is currently £3,500. He emphasised the importance of all residents acting as custodians of the village, hall and events. Thanks were extended to the Ernest Cook Trust for use of the garage for storage, and to Beryl Whiteley, Jane Jenkinson and all at the Friendship Circle for their donations. A new website was also noted: www.eastleachvillagehall.co.uk.

David McKenna explained that he became involved as he recognised the hall's value as a community hub. Ongoing improvements are being made to enhance comfort and suitability for both village use and external hire, with the aim of increasing the hall's overall value. Suggestions to increase usage were welcomed.

A question was raised regarding the "no dogs" policy at the playground and events, which some felt may discourage attendance, and whether this could be reviewed. Reference was made to dog-walking events held in neighbouring villages.

A query was also raised about parking and why the car park is locked. It was confirmed that the car park is owned by the Ernest Cook Trust. The level of attendance at this evening's event had not been anticipated, and therefore opening the car park had not been considered. Suggestions included installing a combination lock or placing the key in the hall key safe for use by hirers.

8. Report from Parochial Church Council

Susannah Gill updated those present on the importance of the need to support village life. She left copies of the following updates on PCC activity over the last year and how to support the **2026 Fete**, which will take place on **Saturday 29th August 2026**:

The PCC is pleased to report St Andrew's Church has had another positive year.

The PCC is sustained by a membership of 10 people who all play a valuable role in ensuring St Andrew's Church is run as efficiently, effectively and sustainably as possible.

We would like to publicly recognise the PCC members given so much of what they do goes under the radar. However, as a village we'd soon notice if PCC members chose not to give up their time to support the church.

- **Edward Arkell** - Church Warden. Takes the lead on key duties including wedding and funeral arrangements and any church related admin. Ex-Church Warden Tim Lawson continues to provide valuable assistance on specific issues when required.
- **Susannah Gill** - PCC Secretary and Fete organiser. Organises the PCC's meetings and APCM, including all agendas and actions, while supporting the Church Warden on admin including the chalk board, electricity account. Leads on organising the Fete - please see notes on page 2.
- **Zahra Khatib-Chahidi** - a brilliantly efficient Treasurer overseeing church accounts and payments.
- **Jane Reynard** - organ player and previously PCC Secretary for over 30 years
- **Jane Jenkinson** - flower rota organiser and responsible for making the church look so wonderful for festivals.
- **Amanda Porter** - organiser of the essential cleaning rota and supporting Communion.
- **Sue Souter** - organiser of the annual Church Electoral Roll and Gift Aid, having been a PCC member for decades.
- **Rob Clegg** - member of PPC and Co-Chair of the Village Hall which is so central to village life.
- **Gordon Land** - licensed lay minister who conducts a service every Sunday, not something every Parish is able to enjoy these days so we're very lucky.
- **Rev Dr Andrew Cinnamond** - our Vicar.

The PCC will hold its Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) on Thursday 28th May 2026 at 7pm in Eastleach Village Hall and all are welcome. Particular points to highlight in relation to the PCC and Church for 2026 are:

i) **Membership of the PCC:** This remained the same for some time - new members are always welcome! We meet 5 times a year and it's a wonderful group of people looking after a really important asset to the village.

ii) **Candlelit Carol Service:** This is one of the notable highlights of the year held in Bouthrop Church and attended by over 130 people in December 2025. Support for this event via donations of food for the party in the barn are always welcome (we could have done with a bit more food last year).

iii) **Support for Sunday services throughout the year:** Everyone is welcome and details of services are on the chalk board. Whether its Matins, Holy Communion,

Christmas, Easter, Harvest or Mothering Sunday services are welcoming, accessible for all ages!

iv) Church Finances: These remain stable. Along with collections, donations and small amounts for weddings and funerals, a significant part of the annual costs for St Andrew come from interest from its investments. If you know anyone who would wish to donate to the church please do put them in contact with the PCC.

9. Report from the Village Fete organizers

Susannah Gill provided a written report as follows:

The Fete will take place on **Saturday 29th August**, once again raising funds for the church and village hall. Please get involved and support! An email has already been circulated to everyone on the village directory but if you'd like more details **contact Susannah Gill** (scgill@hotmail.co.uk 07751 870 929).

Ways to support the fete include:

i) Join the Fete Committee: A committee is forming and we'd welcome more people to help share ideas for innovations (e.g. shall we bring back darts? Other new stalls?), galvanise support and help with some of the admin where needed (all very doable). If you'd like to help out, please contact Susannah.

ii) Stalls on the day: If you'd like to run a stall or help out in any way this year, please let Susannah know as this is such a crucial element to the success of the event.

iii) Helping out ahead of the Fete: If you are about ahead of the Fete, especially on Friday 28th August or morning of Saturday 29th August, please let Susannah know as we need helpers to move tables/chairs, help with setting up the car park and marquees etc. Many hands make light work!

iv) Supporting the fundraising effort: If you're not going to be able to join in with the fun of the fete, please do not worry because there will be many ways you can support the event and our village. There will be opportunities to buy Grand Draw tickets, donate to the Grand Drawm White Elephant, books, plants and other stalls, or bake cakes, biscuits and other treats for Teas.

10. Report from the Victoria Inn

Tom Gabbitas reported on the pub, noting this is his 10th year there and 13 years living in the parish. He considers the business to be performing well. The pub has resumed seasonal Monday opening; it is closed on Tuesdays and open Wednesday to Sunday. Regular events include takeaway burgers and fish and chips on Wednesdays, and steak nights on Thursdays.

He encouraged residents to share ideas for how the pub and village can support each other, for example by providing refreshments for community activities such as for the annual litter pick.

11. Report from the District Council

District Councillor David Fowles presented an annual report, which is appended to these minutes.

12. Presentation and discussion on protecting our village greens

Cllr Fenton invited MOPs to share their thoughts on the agenda items 12 & 13.

The Parish Council is responsible for the management of the village greens. This year there has been a notable increase in damage, particularly to willow green, primarily caused by vehicle use. While the Council has a duty to keep the greens open and accessible for public enjoyment, fencing is not permitted, so alternative protective measures are being considered.

A question was raised regarding the green above the War Memorial, which has also sustained damage, and when signage might be installed. This will be added to the agenda for the next Parish Council meeting for further consideration.

13. Presentation and discussion on the creation of a regular local community event following the demise of the Friendship Circle

Cllr Fenton described the purpose of the Friendship Circle and noted its recent closure. She asked whether there is appetite within the parish for an alternative regular group, both in terms of participation and willingness to help organise. A short survey was made available for completion during the meeting, to take away and return, or to access on the Eastleach PC website. Residents were also invited to email the Clerk with their views.

14. Open Forum

A representative of Noah's Ark Charity at Macaroni Wood asked whether she could attend a future Parish meeting to present the organisation's work. The charity supports a number of SEN schools and provides forest school activities, including for Southrop School. They are also developing respite services for children with autism.

An open day is planned for the summer. Further information is available via their website and social media channels. Contact: .

The next Parish Council Meeting will take place on Tuesday 12th May at 6:30pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting closed at 9:00pm

ANNUAL REPORT 2026

Cotswold District Council

1. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW (2026/27)

Message from the Chief Finance Officer

Cotswold District Council's net budget for 2026/27 is £17.2 million, funded through council tax, business rates, and government grants.

Only around 7% of your council tax is retained by the District Council. The majority is allocated to Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Police, and local town and parish councils.

Despite reduced national funding over the past decade, this funding supports essential local services, including:

- Waste and recycling
- Street cleaning
- Planning and environmental health
- Leisure and cultural facilities

To maintain these services, council tax will increase by £5 per year for a Band D home (less than 10p per week).

At the same time, the Council is preparing for Local Government Reorganisation, which will replace the current system of District and County Councils with new unitary authorities.

The priority is to ensure strong services and resilient communities for the future. The number of District and County Councillors will reduce from over 320 Councillors to 110 Councillors. In the Cotswolds it will reduce from 42 to 16 Councillors.

2. BUDGET OVERVIEW

A new three-year Government funding settlement (2026–2029) introduces major reforms, including “Fair Funding 2.0” and changes to business rates.

- A 95% funding floor limits losses during transition
- Council tax increases are assumed as part of funding
- Long-term funding remains uncertain beyond 2028/29

The Council has set a balanced budget for 2026/27, but financial pressures remain significant.

A projected funding gap could exceed £7 million by 2029/30 due to:

- Inflation and rising service demand

- Contractual cost increases
- Limited funding growth

Financial Strategy Priorities

- Tight cost control and efficiency
- Prioritisation of essential services
- Income generation and savings
- Reducing reliance on reserves over time

Reserves & Financial Position

- Minimum General Fund balance: £1.76 million

- Total reserves: falling from £14.21m (2026) to £4.91m (2029/30)
- Financial Resilience Reserve: significantly reducing over time

Reserves are being used to support:

- Service transformation
- Housing delivery and planning
- Preparation for Local Government Reorganisation (£2m allocated)

⚠ Key Message:

Reserves provide short-term stability but are declining, reinforcing the need for ongoing savings and efficiency.

3. CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

The Council will invest £19.4 million (2026–2030), including:

- £10.5 million in 2026/27 alone

Key Investment Areas

- Environmental Services – £8.45m
- Housing Delivery – £7.66m
- Leisure & Communities – £2.10m

Major Projects

- New waste and recycling vehicles (up to 31 vehicles)
- Investment in sustainable fuels (HVO)
- Improvements driven by resident feedback on service issues

All investment will be funded through:

- Capital receipts
- Grants and contributions
- Reserves
- Revenue contributions

✅ No new borrowing required

4. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR ACTIVITIES

My role is to liaise with all of the PCs in the Coln Valley and to attend all the Parish Council meetings. I also work closely with the County Councillors and our local MP. In this context I have accessed funding from the County Council for community projects and worked with the MP and the Southrop and Eastleach PCs to action urgent repairs on the road to Kelmscott in Oxfordshire

The District Council are responsible for waste and recycling, street cleaning, planning, environmental health and leisure and culture. Consequently I serve on the CDC planning committee.

Where appropriate, I work with local community groups and organisations and over the last 12 months I have been involved in projects such as the Bibury Parking Working Group, the Donkeywell Mobile phone mast and now the Thames water sewerage issues in Quenington.

Having previously run the Poulton Community Shop, I volunteer in the Coln Community Shop and the Southrop Village Hall bar.

5. LOCAL GOVT REORGANISATION

Gloucestershire is moving toward either:

- One unitary authority (1UA)
- Two unitary authorities (2UA)

Estimated Costs

- 1UA: £21.3 million
- 2UA: £30.1 million

Cotswold District Council's contribution:

- £1.6m – £2.3m, with £2m already set aside

A shared transition fund and joint governance will manage implementation.

6. CONCLUSION

The 2026/27 budget delivers:

- A balanced financial position
- A modest council tax increase (£5/year)
- Continued investment in key services
- A fully funded capital programme with no borrowing

However, future challenges remain:

- Growing funding gaps
- Declining reserves
- Increasing service pressures

Looking Ahead

Long-term financial sustainability will depend on:

- Continued efficiency and cost control
- Service transformation
- Careful financial planning

Your Voice Matters

Investment in services such as waste collection has been shaped by resident feedback, Ongoing engagement remains vital in shaping future priorities for the COLN VALLEY Ward.

Cllr David Fowles

Conservative District Councillor

Coln Valley Ward, Cotswold District Council

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Coln Valley Ward PCs: Coln St Dennis, Bibury,, Quenington, Coln St Aldwyns, Hatherop, Eastleach, Southrop

*If you are contacting me as a local constituent please be aware I may need to share your personal information when contacting District Council officers or other agencies relevant to your query. *

* For more information on how I and the District Council use personal data visit <http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-data/data-protection/> <<http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-data/data-protection/> <https://www.cotswoldconservatives.com/>