

Purpose of the Three Year Business Plan

This document provides an overview of the function and responsibilities of Chalford Parish Council (CPC) and sets out the significant activities and projects that are proposed for the next three years (2025 to 2028) with associated costs.

The aim of the document is to provide a better understanding of what CPC is doing and why, and to provide a short to medium term planning tool. To make for a more accessible document the business plan has deliberately been kept short and to the point. Further details of CPC's activities can be found on the Parish website or by contacting the clerks.

Chalford Parish Council – an Overview

The Parish of Chalford covers an area of approximately 2 sq miles (5 sq km) with a population of about 6,500. It is situated within the District of Stroud in the County of Gloucestershire and CPC comprises the lowest tier of local government. CPC's remit is to provide a range of facilities and amenities for local residents and to provide a conduit for the views of local people to other agencies and local authorities that influence life in Chalford.

The Council operates to strict rules and procedures set out in its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations (details on website) and its performance is overseen by Stroud District Council (SDC).

CPC is run by 15 Councillors, elected every 4 years. Councillors are unpaid and receive no allowances for carrying out their duties other than travel costs for travel beyond the Parish boundary. Councillors must adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct based on national guidance (details on website). The Council elects a Chair and Vice-Chair annually.

To enable CPC to carry out its responsibilities, the Council employs a Clerk, Deputy Clerk/RFO, an Assistant Clerk, a Senior Groundsman and an Assistant Groundsman. The clerks are responsible for administering the work of the Council and ensuring that legal and financial obligations are adhered to. The groundsmen maintain the land CPC is responsible for, including playing fields, allotments, cemetery and verges.

Funding for CPC comes from a precept on the Council Tax levied by SDC. Each year CPC draws up a budget and calculates the amount of the precept to be added to the SDC rate.

Our Aims and Principles

CPC exist to serve the local community, to protect and enhance the environment of the Parish and to provide local services and amenities which make Chalford an attractive place in which to live.

The following principles underpin our activities. We will:

- Manage the Council with financial probity
- Seek the views of local residents, represent their concerns and keep them informed
- Operate in an open and transparent manner
- Encourage public participation and involvement of all sectors of the community
- Provide cost-effective, accessible and high quality services
- Work in partnership with other agencies and organisations to generate benefits for local community
- Be a fair employer

Our Activities and Services

Our activities and services can be grouped under four broad objectives:

- A. Providing community and recreational activities for Chalford residents
- B. Protecting and enhancing the environment and character of Chalford
- C. Providing a voice for local concerns and representing Chalford's interests
- D. Addressing climate change and encouraging local activity

The business plan provides a summary of activities that are ongoing from year to year. These are funded from the revenue (precept) budget agreed each year. However, the focus of the business plan is to provide information (including estimated costs) for significant (usually one-off) projects. These are likely to require additional funding to be set aside through the Earmarked Reserves budget and / or funding sought from external sources.

A. Provide community and recreation facilities for Chalford residents

Ongoing activities

- Maintaining three recreation grounds and associated play and exercise equipment
- Managing three allotment sites
- Managing the cemetery
- Undertaking footpath improvements
- Supporting the Frith Youth Centre
- Maintaining four Defibrillators
- Organising Holiday Activities for children

Significant projects forecast in next three years

Play and recreation equipment

The creation of a secure toddlers play area at Bussage Pleasure Ground completed in Spring 2025. The total cost was £44,345.19 of which £36,000 was covered by grant funding from Enovert, £2,425.17 from CIL funding and £500 from Renishaw with the remainder funded from Earmarked Reserves.

The next proposed project is to provide new equipment for Valley Pleasure Ground. The project is still at the very early stages of planning but the total cost is estimated to be about £50,000. Grant funding will be sought, and consultation and discussion with playground equipment providers will take place during 2025/26 with a view to delivery by the end of 2026/27. We have planned for a contribution of circa £20,000 by CPC allocated from the Community and Recreational Facility Reserves. This will include a CIL payment of £1,686 that is available to be spent in Valley Ward.

New cemetery

Attempts to find a suitable site for additional cemetery space have so far proved unsuccessful. A sum of money (£6,259.18) has previously been allocated in Earmarked Reserves to cover legal costs. However, the Works Committee is now considering removing a hedge at the existing cemetery, which would create approximately 24 additional graves. This should extend the lifespan of the graveyard for another 10 years, resulting in a total of 20 years minimum. The works would be undertaken by the groundsmen so there would be no additional funding required from CPC. As such, we do not anticipate any call for significant spending in the next 10 years. We therefore

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propose to transfer the earmarked Cemetery funds to General Reserves and reallocate these funds to other reserves as required.

Footpath improvements

Maintenance and improvement to footpaths using volunteer labour has been carried out in recent years and has proved popular. We have planned for this initiative will continue with a budget of £2,000 - £3,000 per annum for materials and equipment, which is funded through the general precept budget.

Frith Youth Centre

There have been a number of personnel changes at FYC over the last three years, including a new management team and a Lead Youth Worker. FYC are working hard to secure additional funding from external sources, but there is nevertheless likely to be an ongoing shortfall in operating expenses. It is anticipated that circa £18,000 per annum will continue to be required from CPC to keep FYC in operation. These costs are to be funded through the general precept budget. FYC provide quarterly updates to the Finance and Management Committee to enable costs and spending to be monitored.

Composting Scheme

A working group of CPC councillors (overseen by the Works Committee) is investigating opportunities to provide a community composting group, working with a group of local residents. Any funding from CPC is unlikely to be required until towards the end of the three year business plan period. No specific cost allowances are therefore included in this plan.

B. Protect and enhance the environment and character of the Parish

Ongoing activities

- Continue to influence planning decisions and local planning policies
- Undertake wall repair where CPC is responsible
- Maintenance of verges and other green spaces
- Maintenance of street furniture
- Tree maintenance in open spaces for which CPC is responsible
- Preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan

Significant projects forecast in next three years

Tree maintenance

The general precept budget includes an allocation of £4,000 per annum for the next three years to cover the ongoing maintenance of trees on CPC land. Most of the trees with ash dieback have been removed, but there are still ongoing works envisaged to manage ash dieback and squirrel damage to beech trees. All trees are inspected regularly and the allocated budget should cover any further work needed without needing to earmark any further reserves.

Grounds maintenance equipment

The Council has recently sold the parish land rover for £7,500 and purchased a replacement vehicle at a cost of £25,039.00. The net cost to CPC was £20,865.83 which was funded from Capital Equipment Earmarked Reserves. It is anticipated that the tractor will need to be replaced over the next three years and the estimated cost is £15,000 to £20,000 depending on specification. CPC will allocate £5,000 per annum to Capital Equipment over the next three years to cover these costs.

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Neighbourhood Development Plan

Subject to Full Council approval, CPC intend to start work on a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) during 2025/26 to build on the existing approved Design Statement. This will involve consultation with parishioners and will require input from external consultants. The total costs over the three year period are likely to be between £15,000 and £20,000. We expect in the order of £10,000 to be covered by grant funding. It is proposed to create a new NDP Earmarked Reserve in 2026/27 and allocate £5,000 per annum for the final two years of the plan to cover the remaining costs.

C. Provide a voice for local residents and represent Chalford's views

Ongoing activities

- Liaise with external agencies and organisations
- Provide information to local residents and a channel of communication
- Take forward highway issues and road safety
- Maintain the Parish Centre

Significant projects forecast in next three years

Road safety and traffic

The Council is working with District and County Councillors and local residents lobbying GCC to introduce reduced speed limits at the Fourways crossing. If GCC agree to proceed, this would necessitate a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) the cost of which would be circa £15,000. There may be some funding available from GCC but CPC is likely to need to contribute to the costs. The funds are likely to be required in 2026/27. It is proposed to create a new Earmarked Reserve for Fourways in 2026/27 and allocate £5,000 per annum for the final two years of the plan to cover these costs.

D Play our part in addressing climate change

Ongoing activities

- Support the ChalCAN initiative
- Review CPC operation to reduce carbon
- Improvements to the Parish Centre
- Implementation of the 2030 plan and the Local Nature Action Plan

Significant projects forecast in next three years

Support to ChalCAN

ChalCAN has not requested any significant funding from CPC for 2025/26. £4,000 has been forecast in the general precept budget for each of the following two years. The requirement from ChalCAN will be reviewed annually.

Improvements to the Parish Centre

Discussions are ongoing about replacing the CH boiler in the Parish Centre with a heat pump or electric boiler. The estimated cost is £20,000. Grant funding may be available from the government to cover some of the costs. £2,000 per annum will be earmarked in Parish Buildings towards the cost until more information is forthcoming. Consideration will be given to using General Reserves to cover some or all of the CPC costs.

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Additional electric car charging points

We are at the early stages of investigating opportunities to install additional electric car charging points in the Parish and / or upgrading the existing charging points to fast chargers. No cost allocations are made at this point.

Financial Implications

The table below summarises the costs of the significant activities and projects identified in this business plan, and indicates the financial year in which they are likely to fall. These are net costs after allowing for external funding from grants.

PROJECT	Year 1 25/26	Year 2 26/27	Year 3 27/28
Provide community and recreation facilities for Chalford residents			
Refurbishment of play area - Valley Pleasure Ground	0	£20,000	0
Footpath improvements	£2,000	£2,040	£2,080
Frith Youth Centre	£18,000	£18,000	£18,000
Protect and enhance the environment and character of the Parish			
Tree maintenance	£4,000	£4,000	£4,000
Vehicle Replacement – replacement tractor	0	0	£15,000
Neighbourhood Development Plan	0	£5,000	£5,000
Provide a voice for local residents and represent Chalford's views			
Fourways TRO	0	0	£10,000
Play our part in addressing climate change			
Support to ChalCAN	0	£4,000	£4,000
Improvements to the Parish Centre – new boiler	0	0	£20,000

The table below sets out the implications for the Earmarked Reserves Budget.

EARMARKED RESERVE	BALANCE 31/03/2025	3 YEAR ALLOCATION
Community & Recreational Facilities	£21,091.53	£20,000 for Valley Pleasure Ground. To include £1,686 CIL payment.
Capital equipment	£3,888.20	£15,000 allocation over three years for replacement tractor.
Elections	£5,086.30	Elections are not due until 2028 and we have no expectation of using these funds during this three year plan. Propose to reallocate funds to General Reserves in 2026/27.

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Cemetery Land	£6,259.18	We have no expectation of using these funds during this three year plan. Propose to reallocate to General Reserves in 2026/27.
Parish Buildings	£1,918.03	£6,000 contribution to replacement boiler over three years. Possible allocation from General Reserve if necessary.
CIL	£1,686.00	Contribution to Valley Pleasure Ground.
Cost of Living	£7,104.21	Donation and grants ringfenced.
Neighbourhood Development Plan	New Budget	New Earmarked Reserve to be created 2026/27. Allocate £5,000 per annum for the final two years of the plan. Possible allocation from General Reserve if necessary.
Fourways TRO	New Budget	New Earmarked Reserve to be created 2026/27. Allocate £5,000 per annum for the final two years of the plan. Possible allocation from General Reserve if necessary.

Amended April 2025

Approved by Finance and Management Committee 13.05.25

Approved by Full Council 05.06.25

Date of next review May 2026