

Walkern Parish Council Report

The Parish Council Meeting was held on Thursday 2nd April 2026 at Walkern Sports and Community Centre. This report covers some of the issues we have been dealing with over the last few months. The full minutes of the meeting are available on the Parish Council website and on the Parish Council Notice Board outside Budgen's shop.

A Wilder Walkern

The Parish Council continues to support the Wilder Walkern Project. A full update is in this issue of the journal, but here's a summary of how the Council is helping to move things along.

Our New Wilder Walkern Website

Following the first community meeting it became clear that we needed a simple, accessible place for everyone to find information. The new Wilder Walkern Website is now live and will be the central hub for updates, guides, events details and all project related news. It has been created entirely in-house with only hosting costs to cover.

Please do take a look, it's the easiest way to keep up to date with what's happening.

Sharing Wilder Walkern at the Environment and Climate Forum

A Parish Council representative recently attended the East Herts Forum which brings together residents, community groups, businesses and council teams to share ideas and progress.

The Forum covers a wide range of topics, including sustainable goods, green economy, planning, transport, biodiversity, water use, energy efficiency, renewable energy and community-led environmental action.

Wilder Walkern generated a lot of interest and it was encouraging to see the village's efforts recognised.

Nature Survey with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

We met with Tim Hill from the Trust on April 13th to discuss the possibility of a nature survey of the local area. The United Reformed Church and St Mary's

Church were also invited as both organisations have expressed an interest in the project.

We agreed with Tim that an ecological survey of the area would be a very important first step leading to a management plan that included how residents saw the future of nature recovery in Walkern. This plan could include projects that require funding but also those that allowed nature to do the job for us, free of charge. The survey would inform the decisions made by those who are interested in a wilder Walkern.

Tim will now send an estimate for the cost of a survey and we can then approach various organisations for funding.

The Parish Council's budget is very limited at the moment, so direct financial support will be modest. However, we will be exploring grants and other funding opportunities and we'll help the community with fund raising events wherever possible.

Why Wilder Walkern Matters

Nature recovery at parish level may sound technical, but in practice it's about simple, local actions that protect and enhance spaces around us.

Parish- level nature recovery plans help to:

- Understand the wildlife we already have
- Identify opportunities to restore habitats
- Link up green spaces so nature can thrive
- Support national goals under the Environment Act 2021
- Bring the community together around a shared purpose.

Planning

I reported last month that the Council contacted East Herts District Council Planning Department expressing our growing concerns over the way our representations have been handled and the problems accessing the planning portal.

We received a reply asking for specific examples and have since responded. There was **lack of notification on major application withdrawals**. We cited the Retirement Care Village where the Parish Council spent a considerable amount of time and money conducting a survey of residents before submitting a detailed

objection letter. Although the application was subsequently withdrawn, the Parish Council received no formal notification.

Officer Reports Not Fully Reflecting Parish Council Representations, where key areas mentioned in our responses were not included in the reports. These areas include **design quality and local character**; **infrastructure** such as roads, flooding and sewage capacity; **affordable housing and housing mix** and **self-build eligibility**.

In our response the full planning references were given so the applications could be clearly identified.

Finance

The year 2025/26 has ended with an overspend of nearly £9000. The major items contributing to this have been a number of unplanned maintenance issues at the Walkern Sports and Community Centre, street lighting charges for both 2024/25 and 2025/26 falling within the same year and increased village gardening expenditure. On a more positive note, the £95,000 spent on the High Street playground seems to have been very well received. We look forward to a budget conscious 2026/27.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Thursday 7th May 2026 at the Walkern Sports and Community Centre commencing at 7.00 pm.

Christine Nudds, Parish Councillor