



# BUSINESS PLAN

**GREAT CHART WITH SINGLETON  
PARISH COUNCIL**





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## **Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council**

The parish council is the first tier of local government covering the areas of Great Chart and Singleton. The parish council's primary aim is to support its residents in having a balanced life and providing a pleasant and clean environment for all to live in. The services provided are within the council's legal framework. The parish council also acts as a signpost to help residents find the help they need.

While the parish council is not a business, it is mindful of how its funds are spent. Every year the council carefully considers and reviews its current and future projects to determine its budget requirement. As part of the process, the Finance Committee starts reviewing the finances around halfway through the financial year to plan for the forthcoming financial year.

Below is a short summary of the parish council's aims and objectives:

- **Opportunity:** to fill the gaps left by other service providers.
- **Mission:** to ensure all residents receive the best services.
- **Solution:** Identify the gaps and find solutions by working in partnership with other stakeholders including the Police, Borough and County Councils to ensure the necessary arrangements are in place to solve the issues.
- **Ownership:** The council's decisions are made by 11 elected members, who meet once a month. The council also works in close partnership with other stakeholders, for example, Ashford Borough Council, Kent County Council, Chilmington Management Organisation and various suppliers.
- **Expected returns:** A clean, pleasant and safe environment, to help residents to live and build a stronger community.



# COUNCIL OVERVIEW



•**Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council** is the first tier of local government in the geographical location of Great Chart and Singleton, south of Ashford. As a local government organisation the parish council represents its residents and provides services to improve the local area.

•**Mission statement:** The parish council's aim is to provide high quality services to the residents and improve the local area and build a strong, cohesive community supporting young and old.

•**Company history:** Parish councils were established in 1894 by the Parish Council Act 1894. Over time local councils evolved as did the services they provide for the community. The requirement to provide just their basic duties has changed and parish councils now take on a strong and important position as local authority and hub. Apart from the monthly meetings the council provides wider services that benefit parishioners.

•**Services:** The council has a duty to all its residents to provide high quality services to the whole community without any discrimination.

•**Operational structure:** The parish council employs a Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer (both positions filled by the Parish Clerk), a Deputy Clerk (part-time), and full and part-time parish stewards.

•**Financial goals:** The parish council's income is through a tax and is raised by the local authority Ashford Borough Council (ABC) on behalf of the parish council. The precept as the local tax is called is paid in two instalments to the council in any given financial year. The precept for the 2022-2023 financial year is £299,738. All funds received are re-invested in the parish, allocated for projects, or go to a reserve account. The revenue forecast is defined by planned projects which will determine the level of the precept. It is a legal requirement that all money must be spent for the benefit of parishioners.



# WHAT DOES THE COUNCIL DO



Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council is the first tier of local government. The main aim of the council is to provide services for the best value that benefits the residents and the community. The council can establish and provide a wide range of services using its statutory powers. The services can improve parishioners' lives and make the parish a pleasant place to live and work within. Services can range from providing bus shelters, and allotments, to tackling littering and anti-social behaviour. The list below shows the current services the Parish Council offers:

- o Holding monthly public meetings to discuss parish council related matters and to make decisions. A time is allowed for the members of the public to raise any queries and speak directly to the council.
- o Ground maintenance services on parish council land.
- o Communication through the website, newsletter, social media and noticeboards.
- o Dog fouling prevention (by providing free 'poo bags' and waste bins)
- o Organising local events e.g. annual parish picnic.

The parish council has a number of key strategic partners, including Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council (KCC), banks and professional bodies and other various suppliers.

The main expenditure of the council relates to staff employment, followed by ground maintenance, equipment maintenance and tool purchase and parish projects. The parish council also has a significant pot of funds available as grants to support local organisations.

The funds to cover the cost of the services that the council is providing are raised through the precept, the local tax. The precept is set each year during the budgeting process.

The main objective of the council is to provide services to its residents for the best value. The money raised through the precept is just a small part of the council tax. For a Band D house for 2023-2024, this amounts to £118 a year.

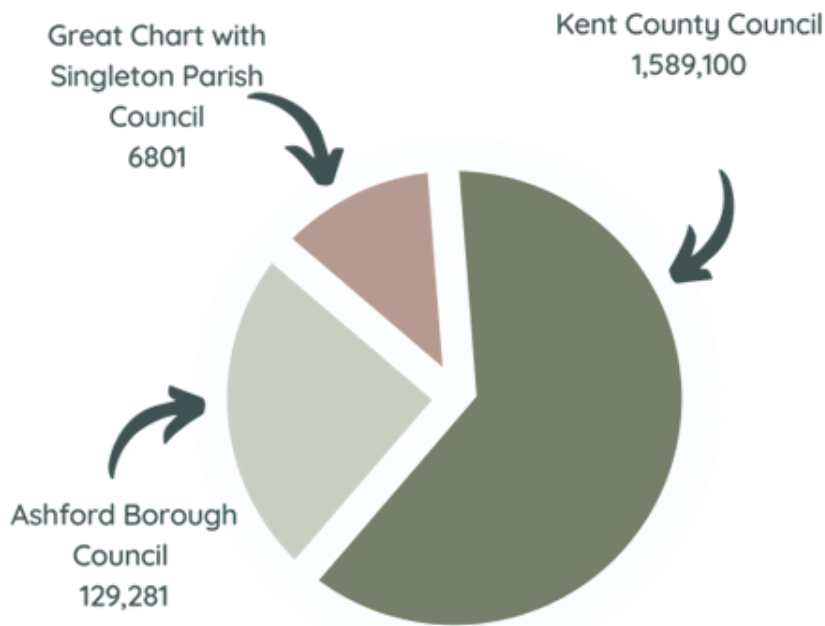


# POPULATION ANALYSIS



Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council falls within the local government sector and is one of the 72 parish councils in the Ashford borough. The parish council's main activities are within the boundaries of Great Chart and Singleton. The parish council is responsible for 6801 (2011 census) residents in this area.

The graph below shows the proportion of residents compared to ABC and KCC.



**Population of Kent**

The parish council plays a key role in strengthening and building a strong community. As the first tier of local government, the parish council is often the first point of contact for help. While the parish council has limited powers and services, they can help to guide the residents to the relevant authorities like ABC or KCC all details are on our website and in the parish magazine.



# OUR STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES



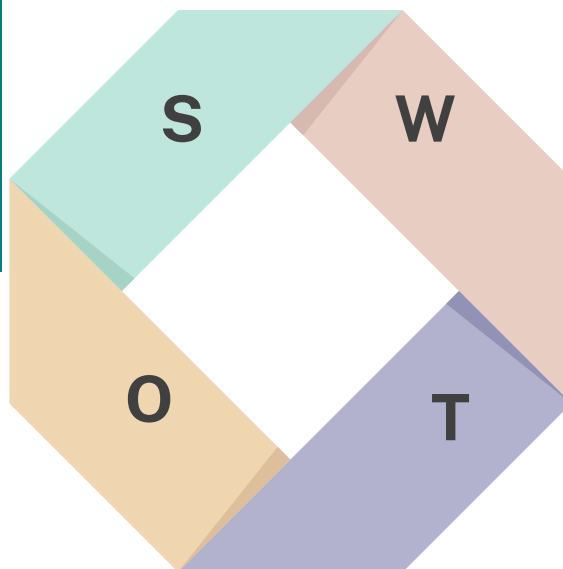
SWOT analysis: The SWOT analysis identifies the parish council's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Please see below:

## Strengths

- Precept spent at local level
- Uncapped precept
- Can build up reserves for a specific project
- Maintaining local assets
- Supporting residents directly

## Weakness

- Lack of knowledge and expertise in key areas
- Gap in capabilities
- Lack of resources
- Lack of experience
- Lack of support from KCC and ABC



## Opportunities

- Providing new and relevant services to the community directly
- Supporting local economy and employment
- Empowering residents in decision making

## Threats

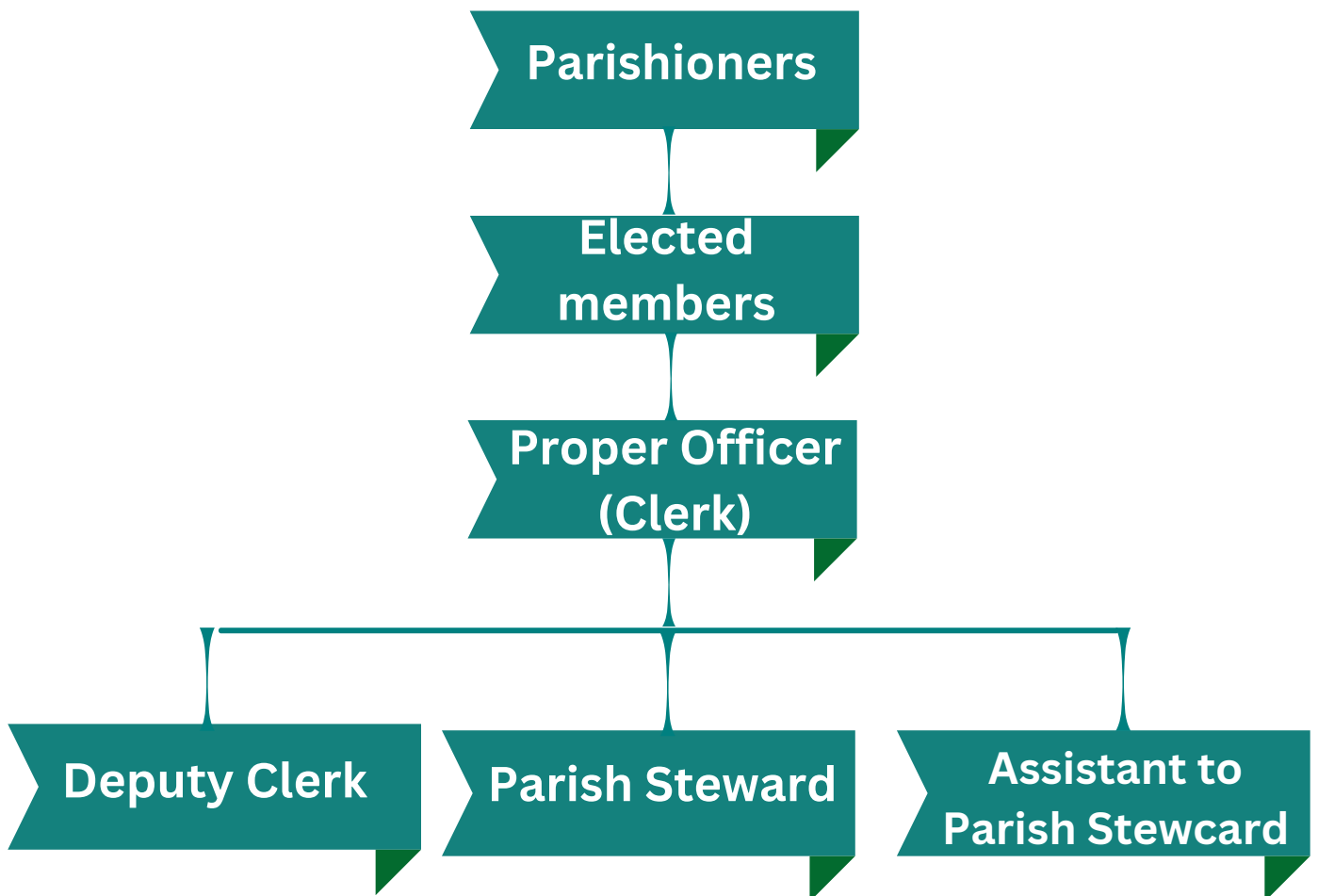
- Loss of key staff and councillors
- Political pressure
- Obstacles to services
- Climate Change



# HOW THE COUNCIL WORKS



The Council as an entity is shown at the top of the organizational chart. It is made up of 11 Councillors who meet once a month to make decisions. The decisions of the main parish council's operation are carried out by a number of employees, these include the Proper Officer who apart from actioning the council's decisions also manages the council's employees. These are the Deputy Clerk and the Parish Stewards (see the organisational chart below)



- **Key customers:** The key beneficiaries are the residents living in Great Chart and Singleton. The residents pay an annual tax towards the services the parish council provides.
- **Key employees and organisation:** Members of the parish council and the Clerk play a vital role in ensuring operations are run efficiently. The Clerk's role is to execute the decisions made by the parish council within the framework of the legislation that local councils are bound by. The other council employees also play a vital role in carrying out the everyday functions of the council.
- The small team looks after a number of crucial areas, including communications and events by the Deputy Clerk and ground maintenance by the parish stewards.





# HOW THE COUNCIL WORKS



Local Councils are operating as a corporate body and their activities are bound by legislation. Local Councils have a number of statutory functions they need to discharge:

- Holding at least three meetings a year
- Appoint a person who is responsible for the council's financial affairs.
- Comply with the Code of Conduct which guides councillors' behaviour in public.

The council as a corporate body is responsible for making decisions at full council meetings. However, a number of committees are set up to aid the full council's decision making process. The committees research and make recommendations to the full council in their relevant areas.



**Finance**



**Staffing**



**Stronger Communities**



**Environment**



**Planning**

Budget monitoring.  
 Audit  
 Reviewing grant applications.  
 Year End preparation.  
 Review Financial Regulations.

Appointing Council employees.  
 Employee Performance Review.  
 Recommendation in regards to salaries  
 Reviewing council employees and salary packages at least annually

Improving community resilience and connection  
 To engage with local residents to understand their needs.  
 To oversee the operation of projects.

Improve and maintain local open spaces and amenities.  
 Formulate policies.  
 Improve biodiversity local level to mitigate climate change.

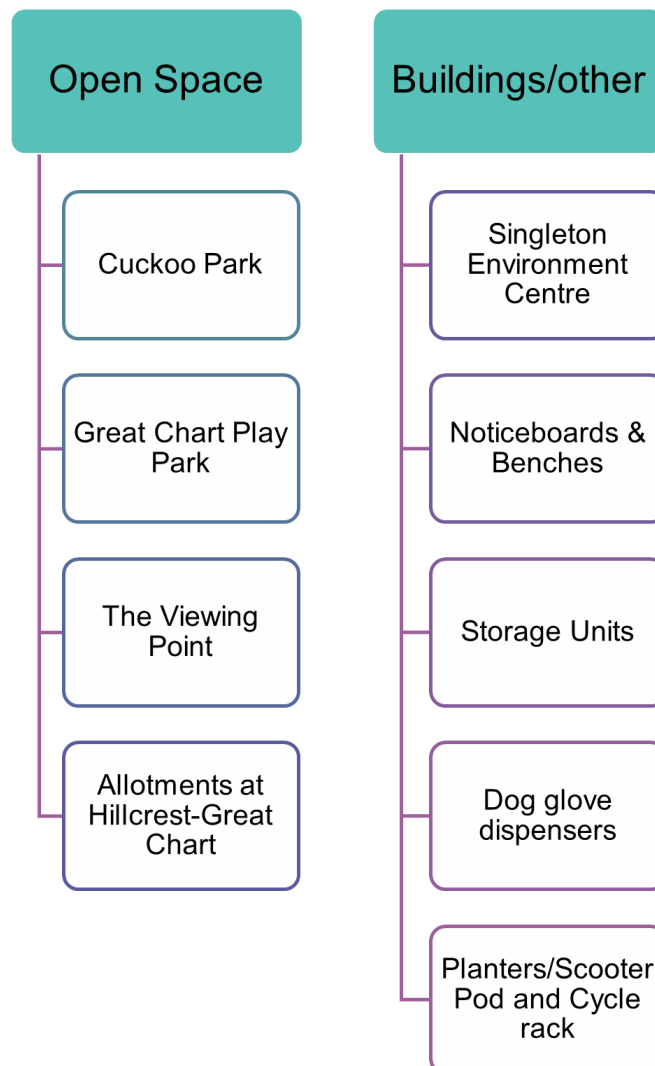
To review planning applications related to Chilmington Green.  
 All matters concerning Highways and other means of access.  
 Reviewing environmental matters.



# COUNCIL FACILITIES & ASSETS



**Facilities:** The parish council is responsible for several buildings and open spaces within the parish. The open space is maintained by the parish stewards. The parish council has invested in ground maintenance equipment to help the parish stewards to carry out their work efficiently. Apart from open space, the parish council is responsible for two play areas within the parish, as well as topping up the dog glove dispensers that can be found dotted around the parish. The parish council also holds the lease for Singleton Environment Centre, which is managed for the council by Singleton Spaces, which is a registered charity.





# COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



## **Communication strategy:**

The parish council's services are promoted through its communication channels and the council uses a wide range of these to ensure all residents can access the information the council provides.

The key messages the parish council conveys to the residents include information about parish council meetings, decisions made during the meeting, current projects, activities, and events. The parish council has a duty to update its residents once its financial accounts have been audited by internal and external auditors. The external auditor's report of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is available on the parish council's website and displayed on the parish council's noticeboards. The council also keeps the residents informed about important local matters, for example, road closures and how to report issues.

The Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy governs the council's activities on social media, including the website and other social media channels. The Press and Media Policy provide a framework for communication published in the press. These documents play a vital role in how the council is communicating matters to the residents in a professional manner. These can be read on our website.

- Quarterly Parish magazine delivered to all households within the parish
- Media; local newsletter segment
- Social Media: Facebook and Instagram
- Website
- Noticeboards
- Events
- Free talks/seminars
- Signs
- Word of mouth





# FINANCIAL PLAN

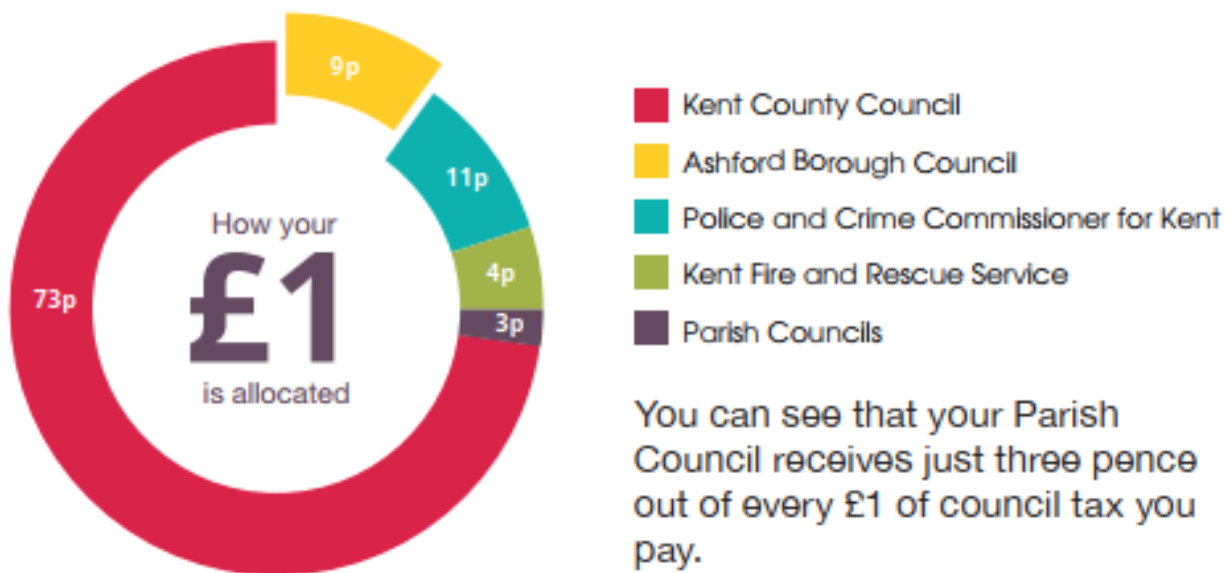


The funds that support the parish council's operation and services come from the precept. The parish council is continuously monitoring its finances to ensure the funds are spent in accordance with guidelines and within its allocated budget lines. This allows the council to identify areas where a specific budget line might require adjusting for the coming financial year.

As the parish council is a local government organisation it does not generate any profits and it does not make any losses either. However, the council does have a list of services it provides with associated ongoing expenses.

The precept is collected via the council tax paid to ABC and in the diagram below we show the amount that is paid to the parish council.

## How every £1 of your council tax is allocated



(Example of a band D property)

**Projected Finances:** The parish council forecasting process for the next twelve months begins mid-way through the financial year. At this point, there is a clear picture of where individual projects stand and expenses in the budget line. On the next page, the top of the table shows the projected income for the council. This is followed by a section that itemizes the recurring expenses the parish council incurs. At the bottom of the forecast table, the total expenses the council can expect in the financial year are shown.



# HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT



	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
Income-Precept	£326,412	£363,466	£386,650	£405,571
Administration Including salaries, grants and other expenditures	£206,061	£237,591	£254,511	£261,591
Parish Steward cost	£5,500	£8,000	£6,500	£7,000
Maintenance	£57,112	£53,625	£57,889	£59,730
Projects	£21,500	£39,250	£40,250	£47,250
PFA	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
Singleton Environment Centre	£15,000	£20,000	£22,500	£25,000

PLEASE NOTE: Total expenditure may exceed income as funds have been taken from our reserves.



# WHERE THE MONEY IS SPENT



Administration	Projects	Parish Stewards	Maintenance	Singleton Environment Centre
Staff Salary	Allotments	Vehicle Cost	Yellow Land	PFA
PAYE/NI, Pension	Mobile Speed limit sign	Vehicle Fuel	Play Park Maintenance	WWI War Memorial
Venue Hire	Parish Projects	Equipment	Play Park Equipment	
Training/ IT Infrastructure	Stronger Communities		Village Sign	
Insurance/ Bank Charges	Raised Flowerbed		Highway Matters	
Office Supplies/ Postage	Capital Purchase		Village Sign Maintenance	
Parish Grants/ Website	Events		Defibrillator	
Telephone and Braodband/ Photocopier	Singleton and Great chart Village Hall		Repairs/ Maintenance	
Audit Fees			Churchyard	

\*The council annually reviews its expenditure, the information above is correct at the time of writing.