



Ongar Town Council

Annual Town Council Assembly

Friday 17th April 2026

7.00pm

Budworth Hall

5 High St, Chipping Ongar, Ongar CM5 9JG

Chairman

Councillor Jason Gunn

Chairman's Report

As Chairman of Ongar Town Council, it is my responsibility to chair the Annual Town Council Assembly and Civic Awards. This is not a formal town council meeting, but a meeting of the local electorate. I therefore warmly welcome you all this evening and thank you for taking the time to attend.

This report provides an overview of the work undertaken by Ongar Town Council (OTC) and its councillors over the past year. What follows is a selection of highlights that demonstrate the breadth of activity carried out on behalf of our community.

Council Activities and Key Highlights

During the year, members of the Council and officers have been involved in a wide range of civic, community, and statutory activities. These include:

- Attending the Epping Forest District Museum CIO exhibition "Town and Country: Life in Roman Duroлитum" on Saturday 14 March.
- The co-option of three new councillors:
 - Cllr Hollingum (Chipping Ongar)
 - Cllr Parr (Marden Ash)
 - Cllr Wingfield (Shelley) This brings the Council to its full complement of 15 councillors.
- Attendance at an extraordinary meeting of the Ongar Millennium History Society, offering support towards its sustainability and future development.

- Working in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust to plant indigenous species within the Ongar Nature Reserve.
- Improving the Council's IT infrastructure and data security, including the move for all councillors to use official gov.uk email addresses.
- Awarding the contract for a new Council website to 'Aubergine', a specialist provider of bespoke websites for town and parish councils. This will improve governance, accessibility, compliance, and communication with our residents.
- Providing town planter displays for both Summer and Autumn.
- Allocating funds to support both the Summer and Winter Festivals.
- Repairs and upgrades to town street lighting.
- Implementation of a new remote phone system, allowing continued access for residents and external callers while enabling remote working.
- Attendance at a celebration event at St Martin's Church on 22nd of December 2025 marking 40 years of service by Maggie Evans to the Joseph King Trust.
- Reviewing and approving new and updated Council policies.
- Updating lease agreements for several Council-owned assets.
- Attendance at the KAVS Ceremony with the Lord Lieutenant of Essex on Tuesday the 10th of June and celebrating the 5th anniversary of 3food4u.
- Commissioning two replica copies of the medieval tremisses discovered near Greensted. One copy is being presented to the Ongar Millennium History

Society this evening. The Council extends its thanks to Mr Ian Channel, Curator at Epping Forest District Museum, for making this possible.

- Organising and delivering the annual Remembrance Sunday Service on Sunday the 9th of November at the Ongar War Memorial, followed by a reception at The Ongar Academy in partnership with the school's PTA.
- Organising the 2025 Town Council Christmas Window Competition for local businesses and hosting a stall at the Christmas Lights Switch-On and Festival.
- Attendance at Ongar Academy's school production of "Annie".
- Participation in meetings of the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan regarding new housing developments.
- Attendance at meetings of the Ongar and District Twinning Association.
- Participation in community and organised litter picks, including work with Essex Wildlife Trust at the Nature Reserve in December 2025.
- Repairs to the boundary fencing for Jubilee Park
- Attending and representing the council both at the local Epping Forest Association of councils and the Epping Forest District Local Liaisons committee.
- Representation of the Council at the Cézizay Twinning Event in France, attended by the Chairman Cllr Gunn, Cllr Roberts, Cllr Eydmann and Assistant to the Clerk Mrs Eileen Gough, including formal presentations and a bilingual speech.

- Awarding grants to local community groups.
- Providing regular updates via the Council website and social media.
- Improving the area surrounding the Chapel in the Cemetery.
- Commenting on 69 planning applications as a statutory consultee and speaking at District Council planning committees on behalf of residents.
- Meetings with developers, Epping Forest District Council, and the Ongar Neighbourhood Planning Group relating to eight new housing developments.
- Engagement with the Ongar Community Partnership and the Epping Forest District Association of Councils.
- Election of the Chairman of Ongar Town Council as one of two representatives on the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC).
- Investment in play areas, including the installation of a new roundabout.
- Installation of new benches within the Nature Reserve.
- Provision and servicing of 11 dog waste bins
- Management of the cemetery, including burial plots.
- Reporting highways issues to Essex County Council.
- Maintenance of open spaces, play areas, and allotments:
 - 43 plots at Castle Street
 - 13 plots at Moreton Road

Financial Overview

Ongar Town Council continues to maintain healthy financial reserves alongside designated funds, which are reviewed and increased annually when appropriate. The precept for the coming year is £342,225, reflecting the Council's ongoing commitment to service provision, asset maintenance, and investment in the town's future.

Progress Against Last Year's Priorities

Staffing Structure

We have successfully appointed a Burials Assistant, who also supports planning work as part of an internal reorganisation designed to improve efficiency and respond to increased development pressures within Ongar.

Planning and Environment

The Council has continued to engage proactively with developers, Epping Forest District Council, and the Ongar Neighbourhood Planning Group regarding planned developments. Councillors have attended focus groups and meetings to represent residents' views and influence outcomes.

Specific Planning focus – working for our residents

- Over the past two years OTC has objected to 9 major developments of which 3 were approved by

EFDC, 4 were refused or withdrawn and 2 are pending a decision.

- For each of these applications OTC has made representation for s106 funding to meet Ongar's infrastructure needs challenging EFDC's calculations as under-representative of the need
- With the applications that have been approved OTC has lobbied for, and secured, commitments to improve the highway infrastructure, including an improved junction at the ONG R4 (Persimmon) site, however not all of our recommendations have been met so we continue to highlight highways concerns.
- Three recent applications have used 'grey belt' arguments as justification for development. OTC has robustly defended the green belt status of these sites, and all three applications have been rejected by EFDC as inappropriate development on green belt land.

Play Areas

Following last year's statutory inspections, ongoing work has taken place to repair and upgrade play equipment, with further improvements planned.

Cemetery

The cemetery has improved over the past year with works by the Grounds staff along with Burial assistant.

Ongar Nature Reserve

In partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust, enhancements are underway, and residents are being invited to form a community litter group to support the long-term care of this important asset.

Looking to the Future

- Investigating the establishment of Ongar's first Youth Council.
- Continuing to develop the Council website for the benefit of all residents.
- Working closely with the Ongar Neighbourhood Planning Group to ensure developments deliver community benefit.
- Enhancing open spaces, the nature reserve, and play facilities.
- Strengthening partnerships with local clubs, societies, and schools.
- Exploring a resident survey to inform the work of the Town Council going forward.

Conclusion

Ongar Town Council is responsible for four play parks, a recreation field, street lighting (selection), allotments, the Nature Reserve, Town Planters and the Cemetery. The Council remains committed to serving the community and improving the quality of life for all residents of Ongar.



Local Councils - Who does what?

Within the borders of Essex there are County, District and Town and Parish councils. All have clearly defined roles, although there maybe duplication and overlap of some of these responsibilities.

**(ECC) = Essex
County**

**(EFDC) = Epping
Forest District**

**(OTC) =
Ongar Town**

CHILDRENS SERVICES

Schools: Nursery, primary, secondary, and special pre-school education

Youth, adult, family, and community education,
student support (ECC)

Children's and families 'service including Welfare, fostering, adoption and
child protection. (ECC)

Youth centres, youth justice secure accommodation and youth offending
teams (ECC)

HIGHWAYS

Street Lighting (ECC)

Traffic management and road safety (ECC)

Highway Maintenance (ECC)

Streetlights marked with a label beginning with '6' followed by 3 digits.

Bus Shelters, street furniture (some) (OTC)

PASSENGER TRANSPORT

Public transport, discounted travel schemes and local (ECC)

Transport coordination (ECC)

SOCIAL CARE

Adult Services (ECC)

Services for older people including nursing home, residential and day care needs (ECC)

Services for people with a physical and or learning disability or mental health need (ECC)

Asylum Seekers (ECC)

Employment Support Services (ECC)

HOUSING

Social Housing (EFDC)

Housing Benefit and welfare services (EFDC)

Homelessness (EFDC)

Housing strategy (EFDC)

CULTURAL SERVICES

Culture and heritage including archives and museums (ECC)

Parish Archive (OTC)

Libraries and information services (ECC)

LEISURE AND RECREATION

Recreation and sport (EFDC) (also County Council)

Open spaces, common land, footpaths (OTC)

Playgrounds (OTC)

Allotments (OTC)

Nature reserve (OTC)

BURIAL GROUNDS (SOME) (OTC)

WASTE AND RECYCLING

Collection (EFDC)

Disposal (ECC)

Dog Bins that are owned by OTC (OTC)

Litter bins owned by OTC (OTC)

PLANNING

Building and development control (EFDC)

Consultation, public enquiry representation (OTC)

Planning policy including conservation and listed buildings (ECC)

Environmental initiatives (ECC)

Economic development (ECC)

WIDER STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

Collection of council tax and non domestic rates (business rates) (EFDC)

Setting the local town and parish council rate (Precept) (OTC)

Registrations of births, deaths and marriages (EFDC)

Elections: Local, national including registration of electors (EFDC)

Emergency Planning (EFDC)

Local Land Charges EFDC)

CRIME AND DISORDER

Community safety and CCTV (EFDC)

Environmental enforcement (EFDC)

Anti-social behaviour (EFDC)

Civic Awards 2026

Awards will be announced this evening for two categories:

4 Residents of Ongar through a public Survey

Cath Honeywell
Kelly Stone
Adam Maullin
Andrew Deane

2 Chosen by Ongar Town Council from the public survey

Wendy Pike
Karen Bush

Stalls from community groups will be present for constituents to visit and talk to representatives in addition to this the Ongar Millenium History Society will also open the museum for you to visit.

Light refreshments will be served at the end of the meeting
(Donated by Tesco & OTC)

USEFUL COUNCIL CONTACT NUMBERS

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL 0345 743 0430

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL. 01992 564000

ONGAR TOWN COUNCIL 01277 365348