CHENIES PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report to Annual Parish Meeting - 2022

This report to the Annual Parish Meeting covers the past year. An APM was not held in 2021 because of Covid but an annual report was produced.

There is a legal requirement for the Parish Council to present an annual report to parishioners after the financial year end in April. The PC would normally write a single report for presentation to both the Village Society and the APM but as the CVS held their meeting in March, this year they are different documents (although there are few differences between them).

Your Parish Council held six meetings during the year. Initially via Zoom but since May 2021 we have been meeting in person as required by the Government. Meetings are held at 8.00pm on the first Wednesday every other month usually in the Sun Room at the rear of The Baptist Chapel. Meetings are open to all and the first item on the agenda is the democratic quarter hour which gives parishioners the opportunity to raise any issues of concern.

The election in May 2021 was not contested. Gill Leaper resigned from the council after several years service and was replaced by Molly Newton. Myself, Charles Macleod Matthews, David Le Neve Foster and David Martin were elected unopposed. Due to pressure of other commitments, David Martin has since resigned. His place was advertised but as there were no other candidates, Sue Smith was co-opted. We thank Gill and David for their help and support over the years and welcome Sue to the council. Councillors are elected for a 4 year term so the next elections will be held in 2025.

I was elected as chairman and Charles Macleod Matthews as vice chairman at our annual meeting last May. In order to reduce the workload on the Chairman, it was agreed that the Officer roles would be reallocated each year and that each Councillor would take "first call" for specific areas. Current roles are :-

- David Le Neve Foster – planning
- Molly Newton – roads and highways
- Sue Smith – Community Board and Village Forum
- Charles Macleod Matthews – footpaths, trees and fly-tipping
- Martin Walker – website

Paul Messenger has served as clerk since April 2019 and I would like to thank him on behalf of the parish for his time and work over the past year.

Local Government

The new Buckinghamshire Council was established in 2020. Sixteen Community Boards are now established as are local groupings of parish and town councils known as Village Forums. Chenies is part of the Chesham and Villages Board area.

Maintenance

The grass cutting contract with Chesham Town Council covering the Green and Greensward as well as occasional maintenance of the verge in Claypits Lane has been in place for two years now and appears to run well. The contract has been renewed for the current year.

The village Green has been under pressure due to careless or inconsiderate parking, builder's vehicles and access problems. Our lease of the Green requires us to prevent parking on the grass so additional 'dragon's teeth' bollards have been installed. We met with representatives of Buckinghamshire Highways with a view to carrying out repairs to the granite set edging, installing Access Protection Markings in certain key locations and

widening the central slip road across the Green. For various reasons, these ideas were all rejected but finally an APM (white line) has been painted on the east side of the Green opposite Back Lane in order to discourage parking there.

As Covid restrictions eased, we supported the Red Lion's use of the Greensward for additional socially distanced outside seating. They have requested that this arrangement should continue this year; an arrangement which the PC supports provided that it is by agreement of local residents and that no on-going precedent is set.

An attempt was made to remove the Village pump last summer. It has now been repainted and re-installed.

A meeting has been held with Buckinghamshire Council's Trees Officer with a view to developing a long-term plan for maintenance and replacement of the trees on the Green and surrounding area. This will be developed by the PC over the coming year. The PC is mindful that it has a small annual precept and needs to have a long-term financial plan for any significant expenditure.

Footpaths

All our paths and bridleways have suffered increased wear and tear due to the numbers of people visiting following lockdown. Added to which volunteer work parties organised by The Chiltern Society have been unable to get out to attend to repairs and maintenance. River flooding has been a further difficulty especially by Mill Farm and at Sarratt Bottom.

This should not stop people reporting problems and if anyone has a path maintenance or access difficulty to report they should do so HERE and also let us know via email to cheniesparishcouncil@hotmail.co.uk .

Highways

As reported last year, the flooding at the top of Village Road has been resolved and we have not seen a recurrence of this long-standing nuisance. The flooding on the A404 between the garden centre and Claypits Lane is not considered potentially dangerous by Buckinghamshire Highways and is therefore not seen by them as a priority.

The desire of Chiltern District Council to name all roads does not seem to have been taken forward by Buckinghamshire Council. The Parish Council do not see any benefit in progressing this as it may incur cost which we do not consider to be justified.

Planning

We continue to consider all planning applications in the parish and comment on these to the planning department for the Chiltern Area of Buckinghamshire Council. Your Council is very anxious to preserve the look and feel of the very special environment we enjoy in Chenies and whilst fully accepting the need for our housing stock to be maintained and enhanced in line with modern day requirements, we do comment or object when we feel that a particular application adversely affects this especially in the Conservation Area. It is frustrating for residents and for your Council when the Planners do not always agree.

The Precept

For the second year running, the parish council decided not to increase the precept for the financial year to 31 March 2023 thus it will remain at £8,240. This has actually resulted in a 1.7% decrease on your next Council Tax Bill because the precept is divided across all the properties in the Parish.

Best Kept Village Competition

Last year's competition was cancelled but we have been advised that this year's competition will take place. Judging will take place between 1st June and 14th July.

Traffic Calming

The MVAS Camera has been put to good use but had to remain idle during lockdown periods. Our thanks to Martin Walker who maintains the data collected.

The plan announced in 2020 for a footpath to be created on the east side of Village Road from opposite the Cricket Club entrance to the A404 remained stalled. However we have received confirmation that the Feasibility Study for this has received funding and is currently underway with completion (of the feasibility study) scheduled for mid-August.

The Community Speed Watch scheme has been on hold due to Covid restrictions but has now been revived. We have purchased our own new hand-held speed camera. Hopefully our trained volunteers and any new recruits who may wish to join them will be able to get to work during the summer. More detail on this is available on the parish council website (of which more later).

Electricity Supply Network

UK Power Networks have now reached the agreement with affected landowners to place our supply network underground. This will result in the current overhead cables on wooden poles which run down and across the Chess valley from Latimer and on towards Sarratt being removed over the next 2 years. There will need to be a new cable laid in Village and Latimer Roads to serve Chenies Bottom who currently receive their power from the other side of the valley. This project is due to commence this year – had it been done earlier we might not have suffered the interruption to supply caused by Storm Eunice recently.

Website

The Parish Council has a new web site – its address is https://cheniesparishcouncil.gov.uk/ . Please take a look!

Its primary purpose is for the publication of all the information which councils must now provide including Agenda, Minutes, Accounts and policies. Here you also will find details about your councillors, their responsibilities and contact details. We will be adding news items as they become available – this report will be published there in the next few days.

In the "Your Community" section, you will find details about how to access the defibrillator, emergency plan, where to find specific properties (we all know how confusing the house numbering is) and some advice for newcomers to the village.

There is a "Visiting Chenies" section to provide information for visitors including a selection of local walks. We would like to add more and also some village history pages – does anyone fancy their chances as an author?

Finally there is a gallery section of village photographs and links to other sites of interest including Buckinghamshire Council (for waste collection, planning applications etc.) and local churches and businesses.

Martin Walker
Chairman, Chenies Parish Council
May 2022