CHENIES PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council Chairman's Report to Annual Parish Meeting - 2025

This report to the Annual Parish Meeting covers the past year. It will be posted on the Parish Council web site in the next few days. There is a legal requirement for the Parish Council to present an annual report to parishioners after the financial year end.

Your Parish Council held six meetings during the year, meeting in person as required by the Government. Meetings are usually held at 8.00pm on the third Wednesday every other month in the Sun Room at the rear of The Baptist Chapel – check the PC web site for the date of the next meeting. Our local county councillors are also invited and we are pleased that Karl Jackson who is a councillor for Chalfont St. Giles has attended several of our meetings. 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.

Councillors are elected for a 4-year term. As I am sure you know, local council elections will be held on 1-May this year. However there will not be an election for Chenies Parish as only 4 nominations were received. The council comprised myself, Charles Macleod Matthews, David Le Neve Foster, Sue Smith and Molly Newton. David & I are standing down and will be replaced by Paddy Smith and Jacqui Sandom. Sue Smith was unable to get her application in in time – the new council will be able to co-opt her or anyone else who comes forward. I have served about 15 years on the council and have decided that it is time to make a break. I would like to thank all my fellow councillors for their hard work and support over the past years.

I was elected as chairman and Charles Macleod Matthews as vice chairman at our annual Parish Council meeting last May. In order to reduce the workload on the Chairman, the Officer roles are reviewed and potentially reallocated each year with each Councillor taking "first call" for a specific area. 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 the environment
- 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 years.

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. However this year the community boards are being reorganised and Chenies will be in the South East Bucks Community Board which includes The Chalfonts, Beaconsfield, Gerrards Cross and Iver. Previously we were grouped with Chesham which has very different issues to our own rural parish.

Maintenance

A new contractor for grass cutting was appointed last year. As to be expected, there were a few issues to iron out but it settled down OK and I am pleased that it has been renewed this year at the same cost as last. As you will see from the accounts, grass cutting is by far our largest expense.

The Red Lion used the Greensward for additional outside seating again last year. We are pleased that there were no complaints made to the PC about it. We do not know whether they will apply to do the same this year. We want the pub to succeed (witness how depressing it looked when it was closed) but acknowledge that local neighbours have concerns about its use of the Greensward. We would encourage you all to support our local businesses.

Footpaths

Last spring the Chess Valley Walk was flooded in several places. Some works have been done to alleviate flooding and we are pleased that this year it is easily passable. Paths in the parish all seem to be in reasonable condition but please report any footpath problems HERE and also let us know via email to clerk@cheniesparishcouncil.gov.uk

Trees

We continue to monitor all the trees for which the PC is responsible – along the Greensward and the Green.

Highways

We met face-to-face with our Local Area Technician twice during the year. We find these meetings useful in order to highlight specific issues and ones which we feel need on-going focus. As outlined above, this year we are being reallocated to the South East Bucks area so will have new local area technicians assigned.

The road between the Cricket Club and A404 has been resurfaced and is now in acceptable condition. The road opposite the Baptist Chapel now has a painted white line in order to discourage parking, so people can exit the Chapel car park and to create a gap for passing traffic. We continue to push to get some blocked gullies cleared as water running down the side of the road causes erosion to the road margins.

Please report any highway issues via Fixmystreet at https://fixmystreet.buckinghamshire.gov.uk It only takes a few minutes - please take the trouble to report them. If you don't report them, Bucks will not know about them and they will not get fixed!

Traffic Calming

The MVAS Camera is now back in operation and we are recording the data it gathers.

The Community Speed Watch team have been in operation regularly outside the Court House. We have ten volunteers but desperately need more as three people are required for each session. In the past year we have reported 216 vehicles to the police from 21 sessions with in excess of 1800 vehicle movements monitored. All these vehicles were travelling at more than 35 miles per hour in the 30 mph limit. The maximum speed recorded was 51 mph; on average speeders were traveling at 38 mph. On average there were 11.4 speeders recorded each hour. Please speak to Molly Newton if you can spare any time at all particularly between 8 am and 9 am as that is when we capture most offenders, but any time would be useful.

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 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.

Most of the village is a Conservation Area and the countryside around it is National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and Green Belt. This places additional restrictions on all development. We urge you to seek advice before commencing any works.

Most of you will be aware of the Chicken Farm development which was constructed without planning permission. When the owner submitted plans, the PC objected and Buckinghamshire Council rejected them. An enforcement notice was issued and the applicant then appealed. Additionally, an enforcement notice has been issued by Bucks regarding the use of accommodation on site. The appeal has been turned down and the owner has until September 2026 to return the site to its prior state and condition.

We are hoping to persuade Buckinghamshire Council to review the Conservation Area with a view to expanding it. This will be a topic for the new council to take forward.

The Precept

We have increased the precept for this year by 2% to £8825.

Best Kept Village Competition

Once again we entered the competition and will be entering this year's competition. Judging takes place between 1st June and 14th July. Again last year we got a certificate of merit for achieving 80%, five years running if you discount the two years off for Covid. Last year's mark was 165/200, the winners in our category were Weedon with 179.

Kathyrn Le Neve Foster has for many years organised our entries, reviewed where we could do better and cajoled people to partake in the village tidy-ups. She will be standing down after this year. I would like to thank her for her hard work.

Please put the 18 May and 24 May into your diaries for the village clear up working parties in preparation for our entry to this year's competition - meet on the Village Green. More information to follow on the PC website, CVS email and Facebook. As well as our own houses & gardens, we need to encourage businesses, churches and clubs to also make sure that their properties are tidied - communal spaces are key areas where marks can be gained or lost.

The Village Pond

Working parties continue to maintain the pond which is by the Cricket Club. It needs on-going maintenance to keep it in peak condition. Thanks to Jo & Jason Sutherland for organising this.

The Telephone Box

The PC have not objected to BT's plan to remove the telephony equipment from the phone box as it is clear that its usage is minimal.

Obsolete phone boxes can't be adopted by community groups such as the Chenies Village Society - it is only the PC that has that option. Should the PC adopt it, full responsibility for the box's upkeep would be passed to the PC. That also means that if the box is used as a library, museum, bike repair box etc it would ultimately be the PC's responsibility. If the box is left with BT, it would have to remain as it is a listed building and BT would seal it shut – it would however remain BT's responsibility.

The new PC will need to make a decision as to whether or not the Parish Council should adopt it.

Website

The Parish Council has a 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 add news items as they become available – this report will be published there in the next few days.

Finally…

Responsibility for keeping Chenies and the surrounding area a great place to live rests with us all. Report any issues through the appropriate channels. Unless they are recorded, they can't be actioned – don't assume that someone else will do it. Please keep the area around your property looking perfect and participate in activities to improve our environment.

Martin Walker
Chairman, Chenies Parish Council
April 2025