

## Church Eaton Parish Council Chairman's Report 2024-25

As Chairman of the Church Eaton Parish Council, I am pleased to present my Chairman's annual report for the period May 2024 to April 2025.

At the Parish Council meeting in May 2024, I was re-confirmed as Chairman and Councillor Alex Lloyd was elected to the role of Vice Chair. In September, Councillor Lloyd stepped down from his Vice Chair role, Councillor Gibbs agreed to become an Acting Vice Chair. In December Councillor Paul Bailey stepped down as he was moving home, out of the Parish. This triggered a co-option exercise to find a new Councillor.

The Parish Council met eleven times in the period, all meetings were held in the Village Institute. The Annual Parish Meeting was combined with the May 2024 Parish Council meeting. There was no meeting in August. Meeting minutes are available online at [www.churcheaton.org.uk](http://www.churcheaton.org.uk).

The Parish Council is funded by an annual precept, raised as part of the Council Tax. For 2024-25, the precept was £7172.70.

As well as its statutory duties, the Parish Council has responsibility for the four Parish defibrillators and their housing cabinets. The cabinets are illuminated and heated and we thank those at the neighbouring properties for providing the power supplies, namely Manor Farm, The Gables at Little Onn, The Royal Oak and The Institute. The defibrillators are professionally checked every month by Gnosall First Aiders, and we thank them for this service. All four units are registered on The Circuit so that the emergency services know their location and status. The Parish Council long-term financial strategy covers replacement of the consumable items such as pads and batteries and also the defibrillator units and cabinets, when they reach the end of their operational service. We replaced the battery pack in the Royal Oak unit, in February.

Flooding remains a long standing source of concern, often raised by the public at the Parish Meetings. The Parish Council has built an historical relationship with the County Council Flood Team, as we have raised these local issues with them and encouraged residents to report their flooding problems. In October, Parish Councillors met with the County Council Flood Aware, Informed and Resilient (FAIR) team as Church Eaton had been shortlisted for funded intervention. They were invited to the November Parish Council meeting where they listened to the flooding issues raised by local residents. At the February Parish Council meeting we included a workshop in Open Forum, allowing the FAIR Team to interact with residents to finalise their plans and engage County Council Highways. In January, watercourse clearance and ditching in the area to the south-east of the village commenced. This has transformed the large flood plain area to the south of Church Eaton. It is no longer permanently saturated and should be capable of buffering a significant volume of surface water. We thank the FAIR Team for their work on our flooding challenges and understand that they will continue to work with County Highways, who performed roadside ditching, gully emptying and pothole repairs, in the affected areas.

Another source of concern is the state of our local roads. The Parish Council has a good working relationship with the County Council Community Highways Engagement Officer. We have met on a number of occasions to explain some of our concerns. This has helped to secure remedial actions, whether this be potholes or flooding. I am pleased that Highways have coordinated with the FAIR Team, clearing ditches and emptying gulleys, as well as repairing the ford at Apeton and repairing potholes. I thank County Council Highways for their efforts supporting our community. Nevertheless, I encourage the Parish Council and parishioners to use the new County Council online reporting tool, to alert Highways about potholes and drainage problems. The defects will be logged and tracked in the County Council system and I have observed a reduction in lead-time before action is taken.

The Parish Council is a standard Consultee for Borough Council Planning applications in our Parish. The Parish Councillors continue to review and make planning-relevant comments on all applications. Parishioners submitting a planning application or with concerns about applications that have been made, are welcome to make representation to the Parish Council in the Open Forum Agenda item of the monthly meetings. Over the last few years, a number of perceived inconsistencies and discrepancies with Stafford Borough Council Planning and Enforcement have been brought to the attention of the Parish Council. The Parish Council has formally raised these issues with the Head of Stafford Borough Council Economic Development and Planning, summarising a number of specific cases and key points of concern. We have received an initial response but the matter is ongoing.

The village Play Park is managed by the Parish Council. Councillors perform weekly inspections. We now use a standardised inspection sheet to record items inspected and report any concerns. In one of the winter storms, a falling branch had damaged the internal post-and-wire fence so a working party of Councillors made the tree safe and removed the fence. The SportSafe annual inspection highlighted the need for some maintenance work on playground equipment. Loose handles on exercise equipment have been re-fixed. Issues with the football rebound board were rectified, reusing a surplus concrete fence post to reinforce the centre leg. We aim to address the remaining issues, in the next few weeks.

We are pleased to welcome members of the public at our meetings, and hope that we are able to guide and assist when matters are raised during the Open Forum Agenda item.

The Small Authority Exemption Certificate was obtained in advance of the annual audit. The 2023/24 Internal Audit Report, Governance and Accounting Statements were prepared and published, for inspection. We thank Mrs. Bellamy for completing the internal audit, in June. We also thank Les Beattie for his work, running the Parish Council payroll, for payment of the Clerk's fees.

The Parish Council funded two, Saturday morning Civic Amenity refuse collections. A Parish Councillor is available on site, during the collection periods. We thank The Royal Oak for allowing the use of their car park in May and October.

In the year, the Parish Council has supported various initiatives, including the village Christmas tree, the Hanging Baskets and Tubs competition, and the Community Speedwatch group for whom we arranged installation of a set of permanent Speedwatch Area signs. The Chairman and Councillor Dodd represented the Parish at the Borough Council Mayor Making Ceremony. The Chairman represented the Parish Council at the unveiling of the new Airfield Memorial Stone at Little Onn, and at the Remembrance Day Service.

Costs incurred by the Parish Council include: hire of the Village Institute for Parish Meetings; grass cutting; playground safety inspection; materials for playground repairs; plants for the village troughs in Church Eaton and Marston; Council insurance; Staffordshire Parish Council Association membership; defibrillator power pack; and the Clerk's fees, as well as a range of other minor expenses. We thank the trough planting and watering teams in both Church Eaton and Marston, for their efforts.

The [churcheaton.org.uk](http://churcheaton.org.uk) web site provides a public source for Parish Council information and guidance, in conjunction with the village noticeboard. I encourage parishioners to download the myStaffs smartphone app and use it to interact with Stafford Borough and Staffordshire County Council.

My thanks go to our Clerk to the Council and Responsible Financial Officer, Mrs Diane Key whose organisation, guidance and diligence remains invaluable to the Parish Council, as well as the detailed and accurate information she supplied, throughout this year. I take this opportunity to express my thanks to the current team of Parish Councillors and to former Councillor Bailey, for their contributions and work over the last 12 months. We look forward to working with Mr. Sharratt, who is to become a Parish Councillor, when the Co-option process is concluded. I also express my thanks to former County Councillor Winnington, for his support and assistance to this Parish, over many years; and to Borough Councillor Rose for his assistance in the year.

Looking forward to the next twelve months, the Parish Council hopes to be able to secure external funding for some new Play Park equipment. The Parish Council Standing Orders (the rules under which we operate) are being revised and updated, to meet current guidelines. The 2025 Civic Amenity visits have been organised for May and October. We anticipate that the telecommunications mast, installed at Woolaston Lane, will soon come into service.

That completes my report for the year 2024-25.

Simon Moore,

Chairman, Church Eaton Parish Council.