

Church Eaton Parish Council Chairman's Report 2025-26

As Chairman of the Church Eaton Parish Council, I am pleased to present my Chairman's annual report for the period May 2025 to April 2026.

At the Parish Council meeting in May 2025, I was re-confirmed as Chairman and Councillor Jon Gibbs was elected to the role of Vice Chair. We also welcomed our new, co-opted Councillor Barry Sharratt into his position.

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 2025 Parish Council meeting. There was no meeting in August. Meeting minutes are available online at www.churcheaton.org.uk.

The Parish Council is funded by an annual precept, raised as part of the Council Tax, together with a small Support Grant and Parish Function Allowance. For 2025-26, the total budget was £7720 for the year.

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 Foxes Barn, 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. In the year, we replaced the pads in the Royal Oak (twice), the Village Institute and Marston units.

The mobile telephone mast at Church Eaton Green was finally commissioned in July. The Parish Council engaged the Office of Leigh Ingham MP to help with a final push and get this initiative over the line. In September, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman attended a site meeting with Leigh Ingham MP, some representatives from VodafoneThree and a press reporter, to reflect on the achievement. This resulted in some favourable publicity as the Parish Council's efforts were acknowledged in the Birmingham Mail.

Flooding in the Parish is still a concern for many. The work undertaken by the Flood Aware, Informed and Resilient (FAIR) Team has had significant impact, alleviating what had become regular flooding in the Church Eaton Green area. Over the dry periods of 2025, the pools on the flood plain to the South of Church Eaton village dried out, indicating that this area had started to function correctly. The culvert under the High Street and Smithy Croft was jetted clear, with significant amounts of silt being cleared. County Council Highways have also undertaken some significant ditching work alongside the Parish roads.

The Parish Council remains in contact with the FAIR team, providing them with timely reports during wet periods. Both parties remain aware that the first phase of work was likely to reveal further problems that need to be addressed and this was indeed the case. I am pleased to report that further work is planned for this coming year and due to commence shortly.

Another source of concern is the state of the roads, within the Parish. Over the summer, many of the problem pothole areas had been repaired. Unfortunately, the winter weather has had a significant detrimental affect on our roads. This seems to have overwhelmed County Council Highways because the lead-time, even for repairs to potholes classified as Urgent, has become very extended. I encourage the Parish Councillors and Parishioners to use the 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 this will help to ensure that the Parish gets a share of the road-working resources.

The Parish Council is a standard Consultee for Borough Council Planning applications within 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.

Some of the larger Parishes in Stafford Borough have created their own Neighbourhood Plans. These are community-led planning documents that are legally binding and set out policies for the development and use of land. Over the years, the Parish Council has considered creating a Neighbourhood Plan for Church Eaton Parish but the case for justifying the associated investment cost hasn't been possible to make. In November, the Vice Chairman Councillor Gibbs agreed to look into this matter. It was decided that we should undertake the creation of a Parish Plan. While these are non-statutory documents, they do record the needs, issues and aspirations of the local community.

With input from the community volunteers, Councillor Gibbs created an anonymous online survey (with optional paper-based version) to collect feedback from Parishioners about various aspects of life in Church Eaton Parish. This was conducted in January and February, with the results collated and used as input to the Parish Plan document. This was issued on 3rd March and is available on the churcheaton.org.uk website. A copy was sent to Stafford Borough Council Planning who will be using it as input to their new policy document, the "Local Plan 2025 to 2045", currently being created.

The village Play Park is managed by the Parish Council. Councillors perform weekly inspections with results recorded on log sheets, for audit purposes. The air skier adult exercise equipment was found to have a collapsed bearing and failed limiter buffer stops. The Parish Council procured the replacement parts and in August, the Chairman made repairs to the equipment. Councillor Lloyd organised some proactive work in the Playpark, ahead of the SportSafe annual inspection. I am pleased to report that it passed inspection and the annual safety certificate has been issued. Other tidying and maintenance tasks are performed when needed and one swing cradle seat was replaced.

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 2024/25 Internal Audit Report, Governance and Accounting Statements were prepared in May and published, for inspection, in June. We thank Mrs. Bellamy for completing the internal audit.

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. The Chairman and Councillor Dodd represented the Parish at the Borough Council Mayor Making Ceremony. The Chairman represented the Parish Council at the Stafford Remembrance Day Service. The Chairman and Vice Chairman Councillor Gibbs represented the Parish at the Little Onn Airfield Memorial Stone wreath laying.

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 consumables; 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 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 Councils.

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, for their contributions and work over the last 12 months. I also express my thanks to County and Borough Councillor Rose for his assistance in the year.

Looking forward to the next twelve months, the Parish Council will continue to work with the County Council FAIR team, to mitigate local flooding issues. We will keep pushing for works on the sink hole in the High Street to be completed. We will engage with the Staffordshire Parish Councils Association to assess the viability of developing a Neighbourhood Plan from our Parish Plan. We are ready to represent and support our community in the Planning Process, particularly in respect of any new settlement housing at scale, within the Parish. The 2026 Civic Amenity visits have been organised for May and October.

That completes my report for the year 2025-26.

Simon Moore,

Chairman, Church Eaton Parish Council.