



Higham Parish Council Annual Meeting 2025 – Chair’s Report

Due to the absence of a permanent Chair for 2024–2025, the Parish Council decided to trial a different model which involved Terry Butterfield, John Metcalfe and I undertaking the responsibilities of Chair throughout the course of the year. Whilst there was initial uncertainty about how this approach would work, it has proven effective, and all Council business has been conducted as expected.

One other notable change implemented last year was the decision to forgo the December Council meeting in favour of hosting the Senior Citizens’ Christmas Party which allowed for a more festive celebration.

There have been several changes in Parish Council membership since the last Annual Meeting. Ian Whittle and Lucy Willighan have both stepped down, and I would like to extend our sincere thanks to them both for their valuable contribution. In January of this year, we welcomed Duncan Wood and at present, there are still two vacancies that we are seeking to fill.

Over the past year, the Parish Council has reviewed numerous planning applications, including house extensions and tree works, which are typical planning matters. The decision regarding the proposed shooting range at Hunters Holme remains pending, with a site visit expected soon.

We have also been actively involved in the appeals process concerning the Roaming Roosters site. I would like to thank Robin Willoughby for his support as well as residents of Fence and, in particular, Brian and Howard who have stood by us when we needed assistance. Additionally, we continue to address concerns related to a planning matter at Fir Trees Grove, specifically regarding fence height and a raised deck area. The Area Committee has acknowledged our ongoing safety concerns.

Our regular community events such as the May Fair, Scarecrow Festival, Santa at the Four Alls, and the Senior Citizens’ Party have continued successfully. Thank you to everyone involved in organising and supporting these events. Special thanks also go to John Meredith for sponsoring the Christmas tree in memory of his late wife Jackie, a former Parish Councillor and for whom Christmas was a special time of year.

This year, we have prioritised village maintenance, investing significantly in various improvements. Whilst we participate in the Lengthsman’s scheme, we are also interested in compiling a list of local handypersons willing to assist with ongoing tasks.

Duncan has already completed a comprehensive risk assessment and prioritised works for the Playground, with improvements already underway. Additional completed projects involving several Parish Councillors include:

- Rebuilding of the wall on Chapel Street
- Installation of a new grate cover
- Restoration of the broken gatepost at Croft Lane
- Repairs within the graveyard
- Installation of a new goalpost and a basketball hoop
- Addition of stones to the playing field
- Ongoing biodiversity project work (thanks to Richard Gadd)
- Planting of the Diamond Landmark Tree
- Planting of four trees donated by Mel Saunders to replace those lost to ash dieback at Higham Recreation Ground
- Public Right of Way work completed with further work being considered

Planned improvements to the bus shelter near the Threepenny Bit and Village Notice Board are expected to be completed shortly. We have also approved the installation of two additional security cameras.

The Parish Council has supported the Village Hall with funding for roof and damp repairs, as well as consultation fees related to their extension planning application. Further support has been provided through letters of endorsement and financial contributions toward their grant application.

The Spout magazine continues to be published regularly, and I would like to thank Alison, Margaret and Bernard for their continued support with this activity.

Although not a Parish Council initiative, Sam's pop-up café has been warmly received by residents and adds great value to village life.

Finally, I'd like to offer my heartfelt thank you to all our Parish Councillors for their time, dedication and commitment to making our village such a wonderful place to live. A special thank you also goes to Patricia Rosthorn, our Clerk for her diligence in keeping us organised and financially on track.

Diane Perrin
On behalf of Higham Parish Council