

Brookthorpe-with-Whaddon Parish Council Chairman's Report 2024 / 2025

Firstly - A thank you to Anne Szabo, our clerk of 21 years who retired from the position in November last year. A huge thank you to the parish council members, Eric, Paul and Rhodri for their regular attendance at the monthly meetings, on the first Tuesday of the month, +and a warm welcome to Kirk, who was adopted onto the council last month.

Thank you particularly to the following for their past and continued support –

Our New Clerk – Tina Balgobin, Who we appointed in November, is doing a sterling job and who has an excellent knowledge of local Council matters.

County Councillor – Sue Williams who is in regular contact with the parish council through her monthly reports, but who we would like to see at our monthly meetings more regularly.

District Councillor - Demelza Turner-Wilkes who has been a breath of fresh air, her commitment to local matters is unquestionable and her actions on our behalf have been exceptional.

Local Police - For their support in dealing with a number of incidents, for conducting speed monitoring in the village, which we trust will continue and particularly PCSO Nicola Wood who has been very active, particularly with regard to EBR25.

Nigel Bone – For the continued distribution of information to parishioners, and his involvement and reports on the condition of St Swithuns church.

Paul Gaze - For representing the council with regards to the village hall, all his support as Vice Chairman, and all that he unselfishly contributes to the village.

Martin Coles - For his outstanding work and commitment lobbying SDC, GCC, planners and developers regarding Whaddon Fields. Without his hard work and hours and hours preparing emails on behalf of the Parish Council we would not have been able to cope with the continued onslaught of changing information.

Village Warden – Who I would like to see at a meeting at some point.

The last year has been a challenging year for the Parish Council. With some meetings having to move due to councillors work or personal commitments. I am hopeful now with the appointment of Kirk, that will no longer be required. We still have one vacancy and ask anyone who has a couple of hours a month to spare and is interested in this wonderful parish to make themselves known to Tina or myself.

Financial Situation.

I am not going into details of the finances here as this will be dealt with by Tina when she gives her report later. But would like to point out that the Precept for 2025/2026 has been set at £16,540, an increase of only 3% from last year, and still lower than the £18,300 set the year before.

Planning

We have dealt with some 14 planning applications last year. SDC as with the year before continue continued to be supportive and appear to be taking our views into consideration when dealing with planning applications.

We do however continue to have major issues when it comes to SDC enforcement actions, some of which are taking longer than a year to be reported back to us and remain unresolved.

One success story is the re opening of the bridal path EBR25 at Naas Lane, which has taken several years to get action and was finally cleared at the end of last year. Thank you to all who were involved in the multi agency meetings to get this resolved. However reports earlier this month indicate that fly tipping at the end of this means that it is once again blocked.

Last year we were having increasing issues with construction traffic coming up from J12 of the M5 through Haresfield and Brookthorpe to access the new housing development at Matson. After discussions with the site and lobbying different departments, additional signage regarding the 7.5 tonne weight limit zone has been erected, and the number of incidents is currently greatly reduced.

While on the subject of Upton Lane, this has, after many years of complaints, now been re surfaced, I hope that the residents and users of this road appreciate this and there has been a reduction in car damage from pot-holes in this area. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for Haresfield Lane which is becoming more and more damaged. Only last week I had to replace a spring which had broken after hitting one of these. I am hopeful that repair work is imminent as they have now sprayed white paint round the majority of these – which I trust indicates that repairs are planned.

We through the efforts of Martin Coles, have been in regular communication with both SDC and GCC, and the planning authorities regarding the possible major housing development at Whaddon Fields. Planning for the 3000 homes has now been submitted. We understood that this would not be until the Stroud local plan was revised, re submitted and passed by the examiners. Unfortunately the re submission was again rejected. In this state of flux we here and our neighbouring councils are at great risk of multiple small applications being submitted and house building creeping along lanes out of Gloucester.

As recently as March we had a presentation from a Planning consultant who was considering an application for 250 houses on Naas Lane. Their modelling and plans for the railway bridge came under scrutiny, but until the actual plans go in we cannot officially comment.

We are not the only council with serious concerns regarding house development, particularly without any infrastructure to support it. Only last month Rhodri and I attended a meeting with councillors from Hunts Grove, Hardwick, and Quedgley. It has been suggested though not yet voted on by the individual councils, that these meetings become formalised, to share information, lobby our MP's together and possibly share the costs of any future actions, and publications to highlight our joint concerns and frustrations.

At the next council meeting there will be a proposal to join this 'Gloucester Fringe Infrastructure Group' which I hope will be accepted.

Burglaries.

Theft continues to be an issue affecting houses, out buildings, farms, and businesses, although police continue to report that our area has a low volume of incidents when looking at national statistics. We will continue to advise the public of issues raised by local police alerts via email, and maintain a close working relationship with the Police.

In full time employment and with a growing family, my time on council activities is sometimes restricted, but I will continue to do my best to serve the community with the support of my fellow councillors.

Thank you

John Hendry
Chairman Brookthorpe-with-Whaddon Parish Council.