

Malpas Parish Council – Chairman's Report 2025 - 26

I would like to begin by apologising for our Chair Mike Williams not being present this evening as he is unable to be present due to circumstances unrelated to the Parish Council. He has asked that we express our sincere thanks to our Clerk Ruth for the continued hard work, professionalism, and expertise she brings to the Council. Her dedication ensures that the Council operates smoothly and effectively, and her support is greatly appreciated by us all. It would also be appropriate to thank councillors for their commitment over the past year. Councillors active participation in meetings, along with the considerable work undertaken outside of them, has been invaluable. It is especially pleasing to see that we now have enjoyed a full council for some part of the year, which strengthens our ability to serve the parish effectively.

It would also be important to record special thanks to Cllrs Martin Shackleton and Karen Meredith who leave us this month. Both have been long-serving members but more especially have worked long and hard over the years to bring our responses to planning issues up to a level where we are better prepared and well informed. Their work on preparing the Neighbourhood Plan over the past 2 years has been constantly beset with problems not of their making and I would like to recognise the excellent progress that has been made which will need to be carried forward by others. Bringing it to the present stage involved a great deal of effort and collaboration, and their work completed so far is commendable in the face of intransigence further along the planning line.

This year has not been without its challenges, particularly in relation to planning matters over which as a Parish Council we have no control. However, Planning will most certainly be a major issue going forward with two large housing projects having been submitted for Cheshire West approval as well as a third that may well happen, all of which raise serious concerns on the impact for the Village and its residents. The Parish Council will work with all residents to ensure that their views are heard and considered in all of our responses. It is also very encouraging that we now have regular liaison meetings on a range of issues with many other parishes and ward councillors and have joined with them in the Rural Alliance which will stand up to preserve and support the Countryside for years to come. These meetings are proving to be highly beneficial in improving communication and cooperation across the wider area. We meet quarterly with them and Cheshire Police to push for better safety locally and on the improvement of our CCTV coverage in the Village in particular I would like to highlight the work of several working groups in the Parish. The Speedwatch team, which is doing excellent work in helping to improve road safety within our community. Likewise, the Burial Ground Committee and all the volunteers they work with as they continue to do a splendid job maintaining and managing this important local facility under difficult financial conditions. The Events team who arrange the Christmas Market and Grotto, and Summer Fair along with our Ward Councillor Rachel Williams, The Appearance of Malpas team, who are organising hanging baskets, are also looking to find a contractor to keep the Village appearance generally better and bring forward ideas to lift the feel good factor generally. Last but not least the Publicity team who have been recently formed with the express role to keep Malpas up to date on Parish Council work and promote the Village (not necessarily for housing development!) to a wider audience and maintain a consistent and authorised message across the media in general.

While much has been achieved, there remain several important projects that we must bring to completion. These include the installation of CCTV , the car park and the Clayhole Croft project, which have seen progress this year but would benefit from being finalised in the coming year. In addition, matters such as the ownership of the former BT phonebox and our continued participation in Remembrance Day and other events remain important priorities.

It would be remiss of me not to mention finances. As a Parish Council it has been nearly 5 years since there was any increase in the monies we have requested from Parishioners to support the work we needed to do. We have asked for a noticeable increase for the 2026/7 period to address three principal matters which have already been referred to. Firstly to enable us to pay for professional advice and assistance in respect of any and all planning matters that already are and will be certainly coming before us. The advice does not come cheaply but the money will also support training for Councillors to enable us to give the best service that the Parish deserves.

Secondly the additional finance will be supporting the appearance of Malpas in a very difficult national financial climate when it costs more to do everything and runs the risk of actually doing nothing. Money that has been available from those Developers who have built in Malpas over recent years has sat unavailable for use while discussions have dragged on. The Car Park project is a prime example but this has now been kick-started after almost 10 years under the Chairmanship of Cllr Mike Williams and is happening - however the Council are not prepared to let similar things happen in future but promise to spend your money well and wisely.

Finally we will be increasing CCTV coverage of the Village on the grounds of Community Safety and will be bearing the cost from increased funds available to us and I personally would like to thank Cllr Mike Williams who has served as Chair of the Council for several years and who has advised he is stepping down from that role at this Annual Meeting. He has contributed much to the Village in that time and has collaborated on putting this Report together for me to deliver on his behalf. I know that he has thoroughly enjoyed serving as Chairman over the past few years. He wished me to ensure I emphasised he considered it a privilege to work alongside such a dedicated group of people, and he will continue serving the parish as a councillor for some years to come.

Alan Moore (Vice Chairman)