

CHAPEL-EN-LE-FRITH PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMANS REPORT TO THE 2017 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Welcome to the 2017 Annual Parish Meeting, and an overview of what your Parish Council has achieved in the last 12 months. The life of the Parish, which includes Dove Holes, Sparrowpit, Whitehough, Combs, Tunstead Milton and Bagshaw, has generally thrived, with plans to make sure that the benefits of a strong local economy continue. For instance, we are working hard to assist in the proposed development of the Longsons site at Town End into a fully fledged light industrial and commercial estate. We also try to ensure that the great community spirit within Chapel and the villages is also supported and that the volunteers who work tirelessly in so many areas of our life are appreciated.

Last year our Parish Precept remained at the level set 8 years previously, a considerable achievement, which was supported by grants from HPBC. Regretfully for this coming year we have had to increase our precept by 2% as it's become apparent that some of these grants may not be available in the future, and also substantial costs will need to be incurred in repairs to the Town Hall and the adjacent Newsagent shop which belongs to the council. We have however, undertaken reviews of staffing and hours worked which will show some cost reduction this year.

We are responsible for the upkeep of the Memorial Park and many other features in the Parish. We have started a scheme to increase the number of flower beds there, and are commencing a process to obtain Heritage Lottery Fund money for a major scheme of improvement to the whole park. We are also working with the Bowling club to improve their club house and facilities. Our various committees work hard to satisfy their remits. Most meet as required depending on workload, the planning Committee is the exception, meeting four weekly to look at Planning Applications received by the Borough Council and referred to us as Statutory Consultees. We try to respond with well thought through decisions, compliant with the Neighbourhood Plan and National Planning guidelines, and trust the HPBC Development Control Committee will follow our views in making their final decision.

We continue to be very wary of planning applications for new developments which if approved, would potentially make the neighbourhood plan worthless. We have, as I write this, just received a decision from a Public Inquiry on an appeal against HPBC refusal to grant permission for 6 dwellings at Tunstead Milton. I am very pleased to say that the decision was a refusal of the appeal, which strongly vindicates the Parish Council, the Neighbourhood plan, and the HPBC Local Plan. This originated as an apparently relatively innocuous application although involving a small designated green space in the Neighbourhood Plan, which turned into a Trojan Horse. If the appeal had been allowed, the developer behind it was likely to have received approval for further large estates in Chapel, much against everyone's wishes. The cost of good representation at these appeals can be high, but we are firmly of the opinion that it is money well spent.

The already planned and approved estates, some now well into the construction phase, with houses occupied, will provide over 1000 new dwellings in the Parish, and this, together with the occasional windfall small sites, provides more than the requirements of the local and Neighbourhood plans. We

have provided 'Welcome Packs' to each new householder, through the Estate Sales offices, and local Estate Agents, and these are helping new arrivals settle and integrate into the area.

The 10 Parish Councillors work hard to achieve this, and I have been fortunate to chair meetings where although the discussions have been quite vigorous at times, the decisions reached were not based on party politics, but on a view of what will be best for the parish. We are also appreciative of the skills and experience of our members, which has been put to good use in so many ways. We have three vacancies currently and with the Parish Elections in two years time, we hope that people with an interest in the Parish will feel encouraged to put their names forward for election then.

I must pay tribute to our retiring Chairman's Chaplain, Rev. Derrick Leach, who has been in this role for 16 years and very understandably has decided that he needs some time at home. His dedication to attending the monthly meetings to lead us in prayer before the meeting starts, and to offer help and guidance when required, has been of great assistance to us all. We look forward to Rev. Kerry Tankard taking on Derrick's role.

Our Clerk, Sue, and Emma, her assistant, have worked very effectively in looking after so many functions of the council on a day to day basis, and keeping us within the guidelines and rules in our decisions. Sue has oversight of all the council employees and ensures that they operate safely and achieve their targets etc. We are one of the largest Parish Councils in the county and our ability to be highly effective is very much to Sue and Emma's credit.

I have enjoyed my time as Chairman, a very unexpected honour, and I look forward to returning to the 'back benches' for the next two years under the chairmanship of Cllr Tim Norton.

John H Brook, Chairman

April 2017 (Amend 10/04)