



Annual Parish Meeting – Chairs Report for 28 April 2026

Good evening and thank you for attending the Annual Parish Meeting.

Over the past year, the Parish Council has continued to actively support our community, maintain local facilities, and deliver a range of activities for residents.

A key priority has been improving communication and involvement within the village. We have taken steps to increase visibility through our website, noticeboards, and social media, while ensuring residents understand how to engage with the Council and access information.

The Council has also approved the development of a new website. This is being progressed both to support the introduction of gov.uk email requirements and to improve accessibility and ease of navigation for residents.

The current website has served the Council well, and we recognise the work that has gone into its development. The new site will build on this to provide a more modern and user-friendly platform for the future.

It is also helpful to briefly outline the role of the Parish Council.

As the most local tier of government, the Council is responsible for a range of community-focused services and activities, including the management of local facilities, supporting community initiatives, and representing the interests of residents.

However, Parish Councils operate within a defined legal framework, with limited powers and resources compared to district and county authorities and are not responsible for all local issues.

Much of the work undertaken is delivered through the time and commitment of councillors and officers, alongside the support of volunteers.

The Council's role is to act in the best interests of the whole community, balancing priorities, resources, and legal responsibilities.

We have successfully delivered a number of well-supported community events throughout the year, including the Summer Fete and the Christmas Light Switch-On.

The Summer Fete saw attendance of around 500 people, significantly exceeding expectations. The Christmas event also included, for the first time, a dedicated sensory session to support accessibility and inclusion.

These events play an important role in village life, bringing people together and strengthening our sense of community. Importantly, they are fully self-funded and do not rely on funding from the Parish Council.

In addition, the Council has been successful in securing external grant funding, including support from County Councillor Doddy, which has enabled the purchase of equipment for the Community Hub.

In addition to these larger events, the Council also delivers ongoing community activity throughout the year. This includes the Trowell Community Hub, which is run by the Council and held monthly, and quiz nights, which we are working to reintroduce on a regular basis.

I would also like to recognise the work of our caretaker, Alister Weir, in preparing a fitting and respectful memorial display for Remembrance Day, honouring those who gave their lives in service. The community greatly appreciated this.

All of this is made possible through the time and commitment of a very small number of councillors and volunteers, whose contribution I would like to formally recognise and thank.

The Council has also begun exploring the development of a Youth Council, following an idea brought forward by the Chair and supported by members, subject to local interest.

Initial engagement has taken place within the community, including a visit to the Girlguiding group, which was a very positive and encouraging discussion with young people.

This has already led to an expression of interest being received, and while this is at an early stage, it is encouraging to see engagement and potential for future development in this area.

Alongside this, the Council has experienced a significant increase in formal correspondence, including Freedom of Information requests and associated internal reviews.

The Council remains fully committed to transparency and to meeting its legal obligations in this area. However, the volume and nature of requests over the past year — with 64 received — has created a substantial and, at times, disproportionate demand on officer time.

It is also important to note that a significant proportion of this activity has originated from a very limited number of sources, resulting in repeated and, at times, overlapping requests, which has contributed to the level of impact on Council resources.

It is important to be clear — this level of activity is not reflective of normal operating conditions.

The Clerk continues to effectively carry out the combined responsibilities of the role. However, the additional workload associated with managing this volume of requests, including internal reviews, has placed significant pressure on capacity.

The financial figures provided are intended to illustrate the resource impact of this activity. They are not presented to discourage legitimate requests, but to highlight the importance of ensuring that such processes are used appropriately and proportionately.

As a small authority with limited capacity, time spent managing these matters inevitably reduces what we are able to deliver elsewhere for the community.

Despite these challenges, the Council has continued to deliver its core responsibilities and support the community.

In previous years, a more detailed financial report has been presented at this meeting. However, given the current circumstances, it has been agreed that a full detailed report will not be presented this year.

The Council continues to manage its finances responsibly, with appropriate oversight and controls in place.

The additional workload has resulted in approximately £13,500 of officer time associated with Freedom of Information requests and related correspondence. This figure is based on the standard hourly rate used for Freedom of Information cost calculations, in line with ICO guidance, rather than actual salary costs.

In addition, there have been approximately £1,350 in external legal costs.

For a parish council of our size, expenditure of this nature places additional pressure on limited resources. As always, we remain mindful that our funding comes from the local precept and is ultimately borne by residents.

As part of our governance processes, the annual internal audit is currently underway and will be followed by the external audit.

In line with statutory requirements, the Council's financial records and supporting documents will be published on our website, together with details of the public inspection period.

This provides a formal opportunity for residents to review the accounts and raise any queries through the appropriate process.

The Council's accounts are subject to both internal and external audit, and in previous years no issues or concerns have been identified, reflecting the strength of the Council's governance and financial management.

Newsletter

In previous years, the Council has also produced and delivered a community newsletter alongside the Annual Parish Meeting.

This year, it has been decided not to proceed with the newsletter. This decision has been taken for two clear reasons.

Firstly, due to the ongoing issues outlined, there are concerns around the safety and wellbeing of those who would ordinarily deliver the newsletter, as councillors and the Clerk undertake this directly.

Secondly, in light of the additional costs incurred this year, including legal advice and associated matters, the Council did not feel it was appropriate to commit further funds to the production and distribution of a newsletter at this time.

It is important to recognise that both of these factors have informed the Council's decision.

This is not a permanent change. The Council remains committed to keeping residents informed, and the position will be kept under review as the current situation is resolved.

Community Events and Looking Ahead

The Council is currently reviewing how community events and discretionary activities are delivered, due to ongoing concerns around the safety and wellbeing of councillors, officers, and volunteers involved in organising and supporting these activities.

Over the past year, there has been a marked increase in the volume, tone, and persistence of engagement, including on social media.

The Council fully recognises the importance of transparency and welcomes appropriate scrutiny and engagement from residents.

However, it is important to be clear that the nature and persistence of some recent behaviour go beyond reasonable scrutiny and will not be tolerated.

The Council will continue to carry out its duties but expects all engagement to be conducted in a respectful and appropriate manner.

The Council is committed to operating transparently and in accordance with all relevant legal requirements.

However, it is important to recognise that guidance and legislation can be complex, and not all provisions apply in the same way to parish councils of our size.

The Council takes appropriate advice where necessary and ensures that its actions are based on relevant and applicable requirements, rather than general interpretation.

At times, the level and nature of engagement have created a difficult and, in some cases, unacceptable environment for those involved in organising and supporting community activities.

This has raised genuine concerns around the safety and wellbeing of councillors, volunteers, and those attending events.

As a result, it has had a direct impact on the Council's ability to deliver events in the same way as in previous years.

The Council has a responsibility to ensure that any events it supports are delivered in a safe and appropriate environment.

For this reason, community events are currently under review to ensure they can be delivered safely, sustainably, and with appropriate safeguards in place.

It is also important to note that some events will continue where it is appropriate to do so. The Maypole and Memories event will be going ahead as planned, with an increased focus on safety and ensuring a supportive environment for those involved.

We would encourage residents to attend, bring friends and family, and help support the event in a positive way, including being mindful of the environment and looking out for one another.

In partnership with St Helen's Church, the Council has continued to support the Tower Restoration Project, which has seen a significant level of activity and strong community involvement over the past year.

It is encouraging to see the progress being made, with repairs well underway and a wide range of events, activities, and opportunities for residents to get involved.

The project is bringing people together across the parish and will play an important role in marking the 75th anniversary of Trowell being selected as a Festival of Britain Village.

We are pleased to support this work and the positive community engagement it is generating, and I understand a further update will be shared this evening.

It is important to be clear — the nature and persistence of some recent engagements have been a significant factor in this position and in the review of events.

The Council remains committed to supporting community events, but they can only proceed where a safe, respectful, and appropriate environment can be maintained.

Parish Council Vacancies

The Council is currently operating with a number of vacancies, and we welcome interest from residents who wish to contribute to the work of the parish.

When a vacancy arises, a statutory process must be followed. A formal notice is issued and displayed, and there is a defined period during which electors may request that the vacancy be filled by election.

For clarity, the statutory period runs from the date the notice is formally published and displayed, in accordance with legal requirements. Any date on the notice relating to its preparation does not affect the statutory process, which has been followed correctly.

If that threshold is not met, the Council may proceed to fill the position by co-option, in line with legislation.

Becoming a Parish Councillor is an opportunity to play an active role in supporting the community and shaping local decisions.

We would strongly encourage anyone with an interest and a willingness to contribute positively to consider applying.

Further information is available from the Clerk.

Recognition of Service

I would like to take a moment to recognise the service of Cllr Cynth McGann, who recently attended her final meeting after 20 years with Trowell Parish Council.

Since joining in 2006, Cynth has given her time, energy, and commitment not only to the Council but to the wider community.

She has been a constant and valued presence through many years of change.

She has also played an active role beyond Council meetings, supporting local events and initiatives whenever she could.

Although stepping down as a councillor, we are very pleased she will remain involved in the community.

In recognition of her service, Meeting Room 3 at the Parish Hall has been renamed The Cynth McGann Room.

On behalf of the Council and the community, I would like to thank Cynth for everything she has given and wish her all the very best for the future.

On a personal note, I feel compelled to speak about the ongoing negative online commentary that is often framed as “scrutiny”, but in reality, can feel deeply personal and, at times, vindictive. When criticism is repeated day after day, week after week, it takes a toll – something that may not be visible to those posting or agreeing with such remarks. You never truly know what someone else is dealing with or how resilient or fragile their mental health may be at that moment. This has been relentless for 11 months and can wear down even the strongest individuals. In my work as a paramedic, I have seen firsthand the devastating consequences of poor mental health – situation where lives have been lost, often shaped by many pressures, including the

impact of others' words. That is why I urge everyone here to pause and think before posting online, and to consider whether concerns could be raised in a more constructive and compassionate way. I am reminded of Caroline Flack, who spoke openly about the intense media and online scrutiny she faced before her death in 2020, during a period of legal and personal difficulty. Her words remain powerful: "In a world where you can be anything, be kind."

Closing Remarks

In closing, I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their continued dedication and commitment to serving the parish.

Despite the pressures of the past year, I recognise how challenging it has been to carry out your roles. Your resilience and continued commitment to representing the community are sincerely appreciated.

I would also like to thank the Clerk for her dedication and support. In the face of increasing demands, she has remained consistently professional and committed. Her work, often carried out quietly and behind the scenes, is greatly valued.

The Council remains committed to continuing its work for the benefit of the community in the year ahead, and to doing so in a safe, responsible, and sustainable way.

Thank you.