

Calvert Green Parish Council

Chairman's Report 13th May 2025

It seems remarkable that I start this report in an almost identical way to last year which demonstrates the ongoing impact of major projects in our area and the reducing support available to the parish council.

Our local area continues to be impacted by the HS2 construction which has taken its toll on our roads and inconvenienced parishioners with the endless road closures and diversions - and continues to isolate our community. It is now more obvious that Buckinghamshire Council services are less than ideal. We have an ongoing list of outstanding maintenance items around the village that despite continual chasing are still incomplete and, in some cases, incorrect information is being provided to parishioners.

I'd like to thank our Parish Clerk, Tracy Horsfield who handles day-to-day parish council matters and keeps the parish council on track. With most parish councillors working full-time, and all the projects in our area, Tracy has a substantial workload and also works full time in another job. While Tracy is the only paid employee of the parish council, she goes above and beyond to ensure things happen.

Sadly, during the last year we saw Cllr David Russell and Cllr Colin Sharples step down from the parish council and more recently Cllr Kirsten Gittens chose not to stand for re-election.

Cllr Russell carried several responsibilities. I'd like to thank him for his dedication and commitment handling the weekly hall checks and other projects including the hall ceiling replacement, fire safety equipment installation and representing the parish council at FCC community liaison meetings.

Cllr Sharples worked tirelessly on our Neighbourhood Plan and we thank him for his commitment and hope that he will be in a position to hand over the documentation promptly for us to progress our plan submission.

I'd like to thank Cllr Gittens for her time as a parish councillor and in particular, her contribution on planning matters. With all the land around us being owned by developers, this has been a challenging process.

Cllr Carl Blakely is a stalwart councillor having served for many years. He has continued to handle local infrastructure issues which, as mentioned above have been difficult. Cllr Blakely has also agreed to take on the Neighbourhood Plan which we hope to submit soon.

Cllr Gary Atkins has been with us now for over a year and is an invaluable member of the team. Cllr Atkins performs the weekly village hall checks, is our CGCA liaison representative, and has taken on liaison responsibility for the solar farm project.

Cllr Ross Yarker joined during the last year and has quickly picked up responsibility for the Mega Prison project and also attends CGCA liaison meetings.

We have a strong parish council and I value the contributions made by all councillors. However, we are currently carrying three vacancies which is putting more pressure on councillors. I hope that we are able to recruit additional councillors to fill these vacancies and help with workload share during the year.

Although I have mentioned all councillors above, I really do appreciate the time they invest, and recognise that this short report mentions only a few of the activities they are involved in.

Frustratingly, some parishioners don't appreciate that parish councillors are unpaid. It is not easy finding the additional time necessary to support the community – we all have many other pressing matters to attend to, and when we finally do find that small window of time, it is very difficult to share that time between family and community, so I want to thank my fellow Councillors for all their help and support to the parish council.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank those members of the parish who have made the effort to attend meetings during the year. Not only are these parishioners a good source of feedback from the community, but equally as important, their presence is a sign of support for the parish council, and it is really appreciated by us all.

Observations and Main Achievements

We took the difficult decision to freeze parish council precept to help local residents at a time we are all faced with increasing costs.

Following last year's poor verge cutting service, we took the decision to take on this service as a parish council. Although this is yet to be confirmed, we purchased an industrial lawn mower and now employ the services of a local contractor. Over the last year the parish council has funded the tidying up of the village which included the overgrown area by the village shop and the remembrance garden.

2024 was also a year that we saw the flooding of properties on two separate occasions – a first for Calvert Green. While blame has not been admitted, it is thought that this was caused by changes to the drainage infrastructure by EKFB with its HS2 works – something that FCC has also highlighted. The parish council invested in two flood defence kits to help properties under threat of flooding. We hoped that these would never need to be used, but thankfully they were available when needed on the second flooding incident. Since then, new culverts have been installed and we hope the problem is resolved. Special thanks to Tracy, and Cllrs Atkins and Yarker for being available in the middle of the night when flooded residents required assistance.

The parish council also installed a small storage container which is located in the car park at the rear of the village hall. This has provided much needed storage for the mower and flood defence kits.

HS2 noise mitigation for our area is still outstanding and sits with HS2 for review and resubmission. We expect to see the updated plans in the next month or so.

We still have £250,000 available for HS2 environmental mitigation projects which we need to seriously consider. We have requested an extension to this fund and a relaxation of criteria for use which is currently being considered by HS2. The accrued interest from this fund has helped the parish council to fund some of its purchases and enables us to freeze precept levels. There are also other funds available which are currently being investigated for other community projects. We have already applied for funding from a Road Safety fund. We have been shortlisted and if successful this could provide funding for an improved footpath at the front of Calvert Green and further traffic calming measures.

The relationship between the parish council and the CGCA is much stronger with CGCA members regularly attending our parish council meetings. We look forward to continuing this closer working relationship throughout this coming year for the mutual benefit of our community.

I'd like to thank Cllr Angela Macpherson and Cllr Frank Mahon for their support to the parish council and welcome Cllr Patrick Fealey alongside Cllr Mahon as our local Buckinghamshire Council councillors. We also wish Cllr Macpherson our best wishes and thank her for her support to us over the years.

Summary

Over the last year, we have seen many positive achievements, and all thanks to the hard work and dedication of our parish councillors and Tracy, our parish clerk.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phil Gaskin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Phil Gaskin

Chairman, Calvert Green Parish Council