

# Calvert Green Parish Council

## Chairman's Report 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023

It has been a noteworthy year, with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, her sad passing and state funeral in September, and His Majesty King Charles III's Coronation this year. With these events, came a mix of celebration and sadness. I'd like to thank our Parish Clerk, Tracy Horsfield for organising the Jubilee celebration which was also supported by Cllr David Russell, Cllr Kirsten Gittins and myself. The funeral triggered official protocol which meant I had the honour and privilege to read the proclamation in Calvert Green. Following on from the funeral, we have planted an oak tree to commemorate our late Queen's reign, which included a short ceremony attended by parish councillors, and Cllr Frank Mahon and Cllr Angela Macpherson from Buckinghamshire Council. More recently, we have erected a flagpole to the front of the village hall.

I'd like to thank Tracy Horsfield, our parish clerk for all her hard work. Tracy handles day-to-day parish council matters. With most parish councillors working full-time, and all the projects in our area, Tracy has a heavy workload and works full time in another job too.

In this last year, we have run at full compliment of councillors. I'd like to thank all councillors for their ongoing commitment.

It's disappointing that some members of the community still don't realise 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 relaxation 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**

Given the increase in the cost of living, the parish council took the decision to freeze our precept for another year – the income we receive from a small percentage of council tax payments, despite our own increasing costs.

Calvert Green's neighbourhood plan process has been a big project for the parish council, and I'd like to thank Cllr Liza Thompson and Cllr Colin Sharples for all their hard work on this project. I'm pleased that we are almost at the point where we have a draft neighbourhood plan which will become the basis for a referendum for parishioners to vote on the future evolution of our village.

I'd also like to thank Cllr Carl Blakely for his support with our local infrastructure, which has most notably included the installation of additional bollards in the village, along with litter and dog waste bins. The bollard installation process was long and difficult, and Carl persevered to get this done.

Cllr David Russell has helped with several projects, but most notably on discussions with FCC on possible allotment land. As a parish council, we are obliged to provide allotments when there is

sufficient interest, which there is. Although it is still early days, I'd like to thank David for his work on this.

With all the land around us owned by developers, I'd like to thank Cllr Kirsten Gittins for her work liaising with developers. This is a challenging process, and I thank her for her commitment to this. I'd also like to thank her for stepping in to cover my absence at a number of parish council meetings over the last year.

Cllr Adele Decent has also been involved with a number of projects including the new play area which was opened by Buckinghamshire Council councillors and was attended by several parish councillors. Cllr Decent has also been instrumental in arranging for other projects in need of attention, such as the parish gates and erection of the flagpole, and I thank her for her ongoing commitment.

I am very pleased that we were able to arrange for the replacement ceiling in the hall. While there is still some outstanding work to be carried out, the new ceiling has made a huge improvement to acoustics and temperature in the hall. It is now safe for hall users and will be much more economical to heat and maintain.

HS2 continues to have a big impact on our community. The scale of the project is extensive, with the works ongoing for many years still. We are impacted by road closures, road works, traffic delays, increased traffic, and road disrepair. The East West Rail project exacerbates these issues in the local area. Later this year, Calvert railway bridge will also close for at least 2 years adding to the difficulties we face.

HS2 communication and engagement is desperately lacking, and I have personally spent a lot of time with representatives from other local parishes fighting to improve this process with HS2 and its contactors. Many residents have suffered property damage or disruption from the HS2 works, and some residents are now in the process of getting baseline structural surveys to help provide further protection.

I'd like to thank our MP, Greg Smith for arranging a recent Transport Select Committee visit to our area. This included a closed meeting with the select committee and local parish and county councillors, and gave us the opportunity to raise our concerns and requests. Some of these concerns did get raised later at the public transport select committee quarterly review at Quainton railway centre.

Because we were not happy with the HS2 noise mitigation for our area, which has increased significantly from the original plans due to the line rising by 3m in height, and ballast being replaced with concrete sleepers, we managed to get support from Buckinghamshire Council to reject the proposed noise barriers in the Schedule 17 design plans. This is still outstanding and sits with HS2 for review and resubmission.

We do still have £250,000 available for HS2 environmental mitigation projects which we need to seriously consider, but until the full detailed design of HS2 is published, it is difficult to know how best to use this. There are other funds available which are currently being investigated for other community projects.

While I have mentioned numerous projects and activities, there are still several issues outstanding, including the grass cutting, and road disrepair which we will continue to pursue with Buckinghamshire Council.

That said, I'd like to thank Cllr Angela Macpherson and Cllr Frank Mahon who tirelessly support us.

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

## **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 clerk.

**Phil Gaskin**

Chairman, Calvert Green Parish Council