

CHACOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Notes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on **Monday 7th April 2025** at **6:30pm** in The Chapel, Chacombe.

Present: Cllr Taylor (Parish Council Chairman), 9 members of the public, Parish Clerk, District Cllrs Breese, and Herring.

1. Welcome and apologies – Cllr Taylor welcomed those present to the meeting.
2. Report from Parish Council Chairman

This year has been a relatively stable year for Chacombe Parish Council with all the Councillors who started the year on the Parish Council, still being in post now. However, due to the natural 4-year election cycle for Councils in England, all Councillors' roles finish at the end of April 2025, when they have the chance to stand and be re-elected into post at the elections on May 1st.

We have also had the pleasure of Colin Lester joining our merry band for a short stint as a Councillor during this last year. Colin has been keen to get more involved in the Village since his recent retirement and he has been a great addition to the PC. However, the challenge Colin is currently facing with his health has meant he has taken the unenviable decision to not stand for re-election in May, but is remaining active in other village activities. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our team, Brendan, Chris, Colin, Faye, Robert, and our dedicated clerk, Kirsty, for all their efforts in supporting me and the Village over the course of the last year. We have lots of things going on in Chacombe and it is great to see particular individuals taking a lead where their knowledge and experience can be of benefit, and we all give Colin our very best wishes and thanks for his precious time this year as he steps down from the Council.

Again this year, we have been indebted to Councillor Faye Wright and her expertise in Planning to lead our responses to the various planning applications that have come up during the year. Of particular note has been the continued appeals by Greystoke for their proposed large warehouse development at Huscote Farm. This is now with the Secretary of State for a final decision but there will inevitably be more in the future where her experience will be invaluable.

The ongoing frustration with Highways about the speed of traffic entering and leaving the village continued throughout the year and, having successfully qualified for the 20mph advisory speed limit scheme last year, we are still awaiting a visit from WNC Councillor Phill Larratt to give the official 'green light' from WNC. As has been stated many times before, all villagers can do their bit by driving at 20mph, in order to protect our friends and families walking to the pub, allotments, school and other village amenities. Stay vigilant and stay safe.

On the health and safety theme, the good news is that our two defibrillators, located in the centre of the Village on 'The Ring', next to the Parish Council Noticeboard and at the School, have not

had to be used in emergency this year. They are checked regularly by Councillors Wright and Williams to ensure that they are in good working order should an emergency situation ever arise.

Along with the defibrillators, all of our Assets, such as lampposts, benches, bins etc. have been inspected quarterly to help us keep track of their condition throughout the year. Thanks to Andy, Chris and Faye for doing these necessary checks. Any remedial work required has then been actioned accordingly. We did have an incident in the Autumn, when the bus stop on Thorpe Road near the George & Dragon had a lorry reverse into it and was destroyed. This was made safe by Cllr Taylor, who has since engaged with WNC and the bus company, Stagecoach, to seek a replacement. This is still in progress as the wheels of WNC don't turn very quickly, particularly when buses are involved!!

We have had somewhat more success in engaging with WNC in the wake of the flooding that several Chacombe residents experienced during Storm Bert back at the end of November 2024. The deluge of rain falling in such a short space of time, coupled with unkempt ditches and partially blocked drains all conspired to cause the roads through the village to act like rivers and certain unfortunate residents' homes felt the full destructive force of the water. In the aftermath, the PC reached out to all those affected and offered support where possible. The key action taken was to get the WNC flood team, along with the responsible portfolio holder Cllr Rebecca Breese, to visit Chacombe to really see the damage for themselves and help implement preventative measures for the future. Subsequently, WNC have had their Highways team also visit and they have identified the drains, ditches and culverts that need attention and are implementing a programme of clearing accordingly. WNC have also written to other local landowners in the vicinity about their responsibilities in keeping drainage channels clear with regular maintenance. All Councillors' thoughts are with our villagers who have been, and still are, affected by this event and we will do what we can to help prevent future storms triggering such a damaging flood event.

The stormy season back in Nov/Dec also caused a tree to fall onto the Thames Water Sewage Treatment works, severely damaging the plant controls. This meant that the plant was out of action for several weeks in the run up to Christmas and that effluent was being tankered out of the village to the main Banbury Treatment works 24-hours-a-day. Cllr Taylor contacted Thames Water's Regional Operations Manager and managed to get them to provide extra road-sweepers to clean the affected roads in the village. By liaising closely with Thames Water we received regular updates on progress which were shared with villagers via the Chacombe Village Voice on FB.

I would also like to give a big 'Thank You' to all others who give their time to help the village and whose work isn't always recognised. John Roulstone has been our Footpath Warden, Geoff Annalls our Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator and Police Liaison contact and Ian Eames has again taken on the unenviable task of emptying the bins around the village. Our heartfelt thanks to them all.

During the dark months, CS&SC again delighted us all with the fireworks display and the Christmas Float which are the envy of many other local villages. As a Parish Council we are always looking to support villagers' activities and provide services and benefits to the village. So if villagers have any event ideas, proposed village improvements and/or want to raise any issues or concerns where

you may need our support, please do use Public Time at the Parish Council meeting, held on the first Monday in the month, unless a Bank Holiday, to speak to us directly. The agenda is posted on the village notice board and in the Chacombe Chimes as well as the Parish Council website. If you would also like to get more involved and are considering becoming a councillor, please do get in touch. Your contribution would always be valued.

Finally, a big thank you from The Parish Council to all the other groups that are active in the Village, many of whose Annual Reports are available now too. It's great to live in such a close and friendly, village community, something that we should all cherish and protect.

3. Reports from other village organisations

Berry Close Charitable Trust

This year has been a steady one for BCCT as our committee has remained intact for the last 12 months. Many thanks to both Dominic Gold, our Secretary, and Felicity Vernon, our Treasurer, for their important contributions in keeping the Trust functioning as it should.

However, Andy Taylor is only our acting-Chairman currently and there is still a vacancy in the Chair should any villager like to step into the role on a more permanent basis. We would be delighted if any existing Trustee, Member or any other Villager would be interested in the role either now or in the short-term future. In the meantime, the Parish Council continue to kindly support the Trust with Andy's time.

Berry Close continues to be at the heart of Chacombe's community, as it provides the venue for the fantastic Bonfire and Fireworks display organised annually by the CS&SC in November. We are also delighted that the CS&SC are planning to use Berry Close for other events, such as a Summer Party, throughout the year. It is great that the space is used by many people and it has been lovely to see so many villagers, and visitors, using Berry Close day-to-day.

With the field, the wood, the Leat and meadow areas, Berry Close provides such a lovely variety of spaces for whatever you fancy doing, be it walking dogs or just stretching your legs, having some family fun or finding quiet contemplation. However, it does take some looking after in order that it remains safe for people to use and we have periodic working parties where various activities are tackled. HS2 have kindly given the village some tree saplings, some of which will require planting in Berry Close in the coming weeks. We are also due to receive some surplus wood chippings from WNC, which we will require some help spreading onto the muddier areas of the pathways around the wood. This should provide improved walking conditions with some good, naturally-absorbent material underfoot. We encourage people to walk around Berry Close as often as you can, but in doing so please respect the area, and other users, by picking up any litter or dog mess and putting it in the bins provided and generally leaving the area as you found it for others to enjoy too.

Villagers may have noticed that our 'Fairy Circle' picnic area in the meadow was severely affected in the flooding caused by Storm Bert back in November 2024, with almost all of the logs forming the circle washed towards, or even into, the County Brook. Fortunately, a dead pine tree in the neighbouring churchyard was felled recently in March due to safety concerns and the church have donated some new logs from this tree which will be taken down to the meadow to re-form the Fairy Circle once again. Thanks to the Church for this.

Finally, votes of thanks go all members and trustees for their continued support of BCCT. Thank you to all of you who help at the working parties organised periodically in order to maintain the area in a condition that is safe for all to use and enjoy. In particular, a big thank you to Geoff Jones who is stepping down as a Trustee. He has decided that now is the right time for him to relinquish his official role but will continue to support and advise the Committee as a member of BCCT. Geoff has been our in-house arboreal expert, regularly surveying the condition of the trees and advising of any potential safety issues. It has been really appreciated.

CHACOMBE CHIMES

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 07.04.25

The Chimes is a non-profit making village newsletter run by volunteers set up to keep the village informed. We raise money from advertising and donations and are very grateful to the Parish Council for continuing to fund the remainder of the printing costs.

Thank you to the correspondents in the village organisations for their regular input into the Chimes and this year we are pleased to include articles written by pupils at the village school. Thank you also to our delivery team who get the newsletter out to every house in the village each month.

Anyone can contribute to the Chimes so please send in articles of challenges and achievements for us to include or maybe you have an experience you wish to share.

As always we are continually looking for new advertisers so if you have a business or work for a company who you think would be interested in advertising with us, please put them in touch with the Editor.

Hilary Maggs

Chacombe Chimes

CHACOMBE WI

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 07.04.25

Chacombe WI have continued invite villagers to share our speakers and have been pleased with the take up this year. The most popular were the Ventriloquist/Magician and the Crown Court Recorder and Employment Judge, Chris Tickle. This month we have a Murder Mystery Evening with a cast of 6 and audience participation and in June a Belly Dancer so quite a mix of topics.

We strive to become involved in projects to benefit others in the community so continue to maintain and fund the garden at the Elms Mental Health Hospital and have made children's blankets for the Linus Trust and premature baby hats for the Oxford Neonatal Unit. The current focus is the Yarnbombing project where Northamptonshire WIs are working with Northampton Saints to decorate areas around the ground for the Women's World Cup Rugby games being played there.

Chacombe is a small and very welcoming WI and we look forward to welcoming others either as a new member or a guest for a talk.

Hilary Maggs

Chacombe WI

A report was also provided by District Cllr Herring and District Cllr Breese as follows:

As we are in the Preelection period. My answers may not be quite as fulsome as I would like but I will try to inform you as best as I can what the council has achieved this past year.

The most important fact is that WNC has delivered a balanced budget for the fourth year. Despite increases in demand from Social care, housing and Children's services and despite the fact that at least 20 councils are officially bankrupt and about 30 more on the brink, West Northants has managed the budgets prudently and steadied the ship.

Children's services were failing under the old County council but now fostering and adoption services are rated GOOD by Ofsted and leadership OUTstanding

Social care has moved from Inadequate to requires improvement and we are waiting for the next inspection to chart the onward improvements.

8 SEND units were commissioned attached to existing schools and the new Special Needs school at Tiffield is due to open in September. This will accommodate many children who at the moment have to make long journeys out of the area to attend a special school.

A new initiative called the Family Hub has opened in Towcester and there are 2 more planned for Daventry and Northampton.

Unlike the family centres they will offer help and advice in one place for all age children not just 1-5 year olds.

10 million spent on roads and pothole's and 1 extra million in the budget next year for footpaths.

Free parking as been maintained in Brackley and Towcester to keep the high streets vibrant and a specialist consultant is working with the cynical to this end.

The Recylcing centres have been kept open and is under new contract at Farthinghoe

I know Cllr Rebecca Breese is hot on the trail of fly tipping and protecting our green spaces.

A new tree strategy was adopted and there is an initiative to have more wildflower verges.

The council is there in an emergency. There was a fire in Northampton over the weekend in private flats. Some are too dangerous to go back into so an emergency center was opened up with our staff helping about 40 people with their housing options.

There was also terrible flooding last year which also affected Middleton Cheney. The worst hit was Billing with dozens flooded out. And still the rain came down. Again the council mobilized to help people find shelter.

Personally I have been involved through the LAP getting a home for Men in Sheds. Based at Evenly woods and we got HS2 with a lot of arm twisting to supply the concrete base. The council grants funded the shed and it is all now up and running. It has been so successful that a second shed is now on order funded by lottery money.

I am an appointed Board member for SNVB who you will know best as supplying volunteer drivers and garden buddies.

They were in danger of going under despite the huge success of the Towcester larder which I was honoured to open. I lobbied and promoted their cause and they will now have a permanent home at Riverside in Towcester on the site of the larder.

I know there was a horrible incident involving youths with knives and delay in police response. I contacted the Crime commissioner and the police inspector to get a response for the Parish Council and I note that a date has been arranged for him to visit and see first hand the particulars of policing Middleton Cheney so close to Banbury and the M40 1st May.

4. Any other issues parishioners wish to discuss – Parishioners raised concerns about:

- the alleyway from Poplars into the playing field being overgrown,
- overgrown hedging elsewhere in the village,
- cars parking outside the school not allowing enough room for other cars to pass,
- potholes.

Meeting closed @ 7:40pm