

Parish Council Chair's Report for the Annual Parish Meeting on 24 April 2025

Intro

The Parish Council had another varied year managing the village's services and facilities, making financial decisions to deliver those services, protecting and improving the built and natural environment by assessing and commenting on local planning applications, getting involved with working groups for new and ongoing projects, and liaising with other organisations.

In February, Jess Davis stepped down as Clerk, but we are pleased to say that a successful recruitment campaign has resulted in the appointment of Debbie Tutchell, who will join us on 1 May.

Councillors

The Parish Council currently has eight serving councillors. This leaves the council with three positions remaining.

Please talk to a councillor or email us if you would like to join us and get involved in upcoming projects in the Parish.

Planning applications

The Parish Council has considered 12 planning applications this year, including agricultural/equestrian changes of use, extensions on homes within the housing boundary, tracks and paths, and one solar project. In total, we supported nine of these applications and objected with comments to three. Seven of these 12 applications were subsequently permitted, one was withdrawn, and none were refused. Four are still awaiting a decision.

We insist that applications consider the village's character in their construction design and material use, and have brought issues that may otherwise have been missed to officers' attention.

It is frustrating to note that after nine years, the Old Lane development is still ongoing, and the long-awaited planning application submitted at the end of May last year is one of those still pending a decision.

Both parish and ward councillors will continue to press for the best outcome for the community in all planning applications and would like to welcome all new residents to our village.

Local Plan Consultation

The new Local Plan, which was expected to be adopted last year, has been reset due to the new government's changes to the planning process. Further consultation is scheduled with residents and the Parish Council over the summer this year; however, it is unclear how this will impact rural areas of BathNES.

We will continue to participate in and comment on consultations as and when they arise, while encouraging residents to take the time to comment directly when public opinion is sought.

Finance

In January, £60,500 was agreed as the Annual Parish Precept for 2025/2026. This has increased from last year, but it has allowed us to complete the investment for the refurbishment of the Pavilion on The Rec, and it will allow us to provide youth services in the village through Youth Connect SW, along with repainting the MUGA.

We hope some of you made it to the grand opening of the refurbished Pavilion on Saturday. It now boasts modern and safeguarding-compliant changing rooms, showers, and toilet facilities, as well as a much-improved clubhouse complete with bar, fully functioning kitchen, and ample space for sporting and small events.

The funding obtained through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) via the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) last year has made the building as energy efficient as possible. Since it was commissioned in March, it has already saved 217kg of CO₂.

We want to thank Temple Cloud Cricket Club, which, through its resourcefulness and a grant from the English Cricket Board, provided additional funding to complete the refurbishment.

This facility is now the official new home for Temple Cloud Cricket Club, but it is still a parish council asset that will be available to hire. Cllrs Gray, Pidcock and I enjoyed using the new clubhouse for our recent Clerk interviews.

With no new developments coming to fruition in the past year, we have received no new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments to spend on capital investments.

Section 137 Grants totalling £4,700 were approved in May 2024 for payment last year. These were distributed to Farmborough Memorial Hall, Farmborough Goodwill Club, All Saints Churchyard, Farmborough Sports and Social, Farmborough Good Neighbours, Farmborough Flower Show, Cameo, Farmborough Pre-School, and Farmborough School Association.

A separate grant of £100 was also made to Midsomer Norton Dial-a-Ride.

Any community group in Farmborough can request a grant using a Section 137 Grant Application Form detailing what they plan to use the money for. If granted, a condition of receipt is that a report should be presented at this annual meeting to provide feedback to the community on how the funds were spent.

Highways

The Vehicle-Activated Sign (VAS) on Timsbury Road, replaced in the summer of 2023, is out of action again due to being hit twice. The matter has been referred back to the traffic safety team at BANES, which is considering options.

Residents have complained about the speed of traffic along the A39 through Farmborough from the New Inn through to Hobbs Wall, despite the speed limit reductions introduced in 2023. Ongoing conversations are being had with the Highways team and the Police about

what can be done to improve the situation. Those residents who have expressed an interest in setting up a Community Speed Watch Group are encouraged to do so and will be supported by the Parish Council.

Other meetings

During the year, the Parish Council attended meetings of the Somer Valley Area Forum, of which we are a member, and some of the Chew Valley Area Forum. These fora are held every three to four months (online or in person) and are open to all BathNES residents.

I also attended the BathNES Parish Liaison meetings and a variety of BathNES meetings and webinars organised by the council that were relevant to our community, public transport, and the climate and nature emergency.

Recreation Ground & Play Areas

As the works on the Pavilion have concluded, the Parish Council is now looking to upgrade and improve facilities at the Rec and the play area on the Glebe field near the Church. Some parishioners have expressed an interest in helping, and once our new Clerk is in position, we will begin to focus our efforts on this project and consider how it will be funded.

The Recreation Ground and Pavilion are still managed through the dedication of Cllr Gray, who heads up the Sports and Social Committee with support from additional councillors and Temple Cloud Cricket Club members. Residents are welcome to get involved; please get in touch.

RoSPA continues to conduct the annual safety inspections of the children's play area and the MUGA.

Tree inspections last year saw several more Ash trees being removed, but oak tree saplings collected from residents are being used to fill the gaps along the border with Tilley Lane. Plans to plant hedging along the border with Brookside Drive properties are still being considered alongside the wider plans for The Rec. The vegetation on the border with Holly Gardens is the responsibility of Blue Cedar, which has yet to carry out any maintenance or improvements, as required in its conditions for developing the site. The management company has been contacted, but a plan is still not in place.

Street scene

David Haynes stepped down as our street sweeper last year, but another swift recruitment campaign welcomed Alex Vowles to the team. Alex is a very keen litter picker and will also help us during the summer months strimming around the play area and footpaths, for which we receive funding from BANES. We receive ongoing positive comments about this work and how our sweepers help to maintain the tidiness of the village.

Allotments

Most of the parish allotments are in good condition and are currently in use, but some have become available this year. As there is no longer a waiting list, we are advertising

availability. Allotments are open to all Farmborough residents as a priority, but they are also open to residents from other villages if there are no parishioners on the list.

The rent was maintained at £25 per plot for 2025/26.

Climate and Nature Emergency

The energy efficiency measures at the Pavilion have allowed the final building belonging to the parish to move towards reducing its carbon footprint. Along with the Memorial Hall, we should be proud of our contribution towards Net Zero as a village. However, there is always further work to do, and the Climate & Nature Emergency Working Group will now focus on helping to encourage the local community to make small positive actions achievable by all.

Finally

I want to thank all the parish councillors for their support, input, and knowledge over the past year, as well as those parishioners who raise queries or highlight issues.

It is important for us as a Parish Council to be aware of the views within the village. We encourage parishioners to communicate directly with councillors by attending a Parish Council meeting or emailing the clerk's address.

We would also like to acknowledge everyone who works hard to make Farmborough a great place to live and work, from directly helping their neighbours to organising village events that everyone can enjoy.

This concludes the Chair's Report for 2023/2025. Any questions?

Sam Ross

Chair of Farmborough Parish Council