Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council

APM - Chairmans Report 2025

I am delighted to be here giving my second annual report as Chairman of Council. It has been a continued privilege

And so now I'd like to set out what we've been up to since I stood at the last Annual Parish Meeting:

- The most important being the work we've done on the retention of the Community Warden; Jackie West. When KCC announced a reduction to the number of wardens within the county, we knew this would be a huge loss to the community and so we swiftly begun working with neighbouring parishes and our County Councillor to identify a way of retaining the brilliant service that Jackie offers here in our parish.

  I am delighted to say that we agreed to a sponsorship agreement that keeps Jackie serving our parish for 1.5 days a week, with the neighbouring parish of Hartley doing the same. As you heard earlier tonight, Jackie continues to do an amazing job supporting our community, going above and beyond. So, thank you Jackie.

- At Christmas, we held two events; the first was a Christmas Afternoon Tea, which was a free-to-attend event for the elderly and socially isolated members of our community. An afternoon of food and music was enjoyed by many! The second event was a Family Fun Day held at the Sports Centre, thanks to grant funding from Cllr David Brazier, a range of activities were put on for children including a visit from Santa!

- The Parish Council has during the past year made improvements to our community engagement, hosting a second multi-agency drop in event in New Ash Green Village Hall in September 2024. We've also been more active on social media, letting people know what we're working on and we continue to regularly publish the Bulletin that is delivered to every household in the parish.

- We've continued to work on updating our Highways Improvement Plan, These plans are used to highlight local highways issues and to give an order of priority as to which issues get addressed first. In this process, the Parish Council have funded a pedestrian count survey to assess the need for a potential pedestrian crossing between Olivers Mill and Penenden.

- The Parish Council continues to participate in meetings alongside New Ash Green Village Association with the new managing agents of New Ash Green Shopping Centre, enabling us to represent the views of our residents. I am

sure residents will be pleased to know the managing agents will be publishing publicly proposed improvements to the Centre in the near future.

- The Parish Council has worked diligently to respond to Planning Applications and to understand the changes made to the National Planning Policy Framework. The largest applications that we have commented on this year were the New Ash Green Solar Farm proposal and the London Golf Club expansion proposal.

- The Parish Council has regularly hosted the Crime and ASB Focus Group, this is attended by a range of partner agencies including Kent Police, Sevenoaks Community Safety Unit, the Community Warden, Village Association and resident societies. These meetings allow discussion of local crime issues and to work together to identify suitable solutions.

- During the course of this year, we said goodbye to Maggie Howe who served as a Councillor for Hodsoll Street and Ridley for a number of years and sadly had to step away due to time commitments. I am sure all of my fellow Councillors will agree Maggie's knowledge on the rural environment was invaluable to us.

- In closing my remarks tonight, I wish to thank my fellow Parish Councillors for all of your contributions and time throughout the year. I am grateful that unlike other parishes you may hear about in the news, here at Ash-cum-Ridley we work as one team and even when there are differences in opinion, everyone is respectful of one another.

  I also particularly wanted to thank Cllrs. Carol Clark and Matt Aspinall for serving as Joint Vice-Chairman, and for all of your support to me.

  I also wish to thank our County and District Councillors, the Village Association and our neighbouring parishes, for continuing to work alongside us to serve our communities and try and make a positive difference.

  To my family and friends, some of whom are here tonight, for all of their support to me.

  And finally, a massive thank you to our officers, Alison, Karen and Megan. Day-in-day out, they continue to serve this community and make a positive difference, without them the Parish Council could not achieve what it has.

That concludes my report and we can now move onto opening the floor for any questions you wish to ask either the Parish Council or any of our earlier speakers.