

Chairman's Report: May 2025 – May 2026

Personal Perspective

It has been an honour to serve as Chairman during this productive year. Parish Councillors are unpaid volunteers who give up their time to give something back to the wards they represent. I would like to thank all of the Parish Councillors for their hard work, commitment and dedication this year. We began the year by welcoming new members Councillor Adrian Holt and later on Councillor Natalie Medicott through co-option. We also welcomed Councillor Naylor as our Shropshire Councillor. We sadly said goodbye to Councillor Charlie Baker who resigned. Charlie had served on the parish council for many year including undertaking the roles of Vice Chair and Chairman and was very much a valued member of the Parish Council. I would like to formally thank Councillor Baker for his years of dedication and the support he provided over the years.

While we face ongoing challenges—particularly regarding road safety and local infrastructure—I am proud of the Council's commitment to improving the quality of life in both Leebotwood and Longnor.

Key Activities & Achievements

- **Road Safety and Traffic Calming:** Improving safety on the A49 and through our villages has remained a top priority. We continue to push for a pedestrian crossing in Leebotwood and are actively pursuing the installation of Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) in both villages.
- **Infrastructure Improvements:** After persistent reporting, the A49 streetlights have finally been repaired. We are also formally addressing the "appalling situation" regarding drains and potholes in Longnor to ensure better road conditions for all.
- **Council Modernisation:** We have completely updated our procedural documents and assets register to ensure they meet current standards. Additionally, we have signed the "Civility and Respect Pledge" to uphold the highest standards of conduct.
- **Planning:** The Council has reviewed numerous planning applications throughout the year, supporting local developments and agricultural needs while ensuring they align with the character of our parishes.

Community Initiatives

- **Village Hall Support:** A significant achievement this year was the awarding of a £6,000 grant to Longnor Village Hall for much-needed window replacements and acoustic improvements. We also granted £2,706 to Leebotwood Village Hall for various repairs.
- **Digital Connectivity:** Recognising the importance of staying connected, the Council has been investigating the feasibility and costs of installing Wi-Fi in both village halls.

- **Community Communication:** To better inform our residents, we are working on a new Council newsletter and aim to have a regular presence in the "Steeplewood Fold" magazine.

Financial Standing

The Council maintains a responsible and transparent financial position. The Parish Council is acutely aware that we are funded by the precept paid by households in the Parish along with some grant funding. We account for every penny spent and are audited each year to make sure we are spending the money in an effective way to benefit the communities we represent.

- **Precept and Budget:** For the 2026/2027 financial year, the Council has set a budget and a precept of £10,000, which equates to approximately £49.66 per Band D household.
- **Financial Governance:** Regular bank reconciliations are presented by the Clerk and approved by the Council at every meeting to ensure full accountability.
- **Strategic Investment:** We have committed funds to essential community projects, including the village hall grants and the planned purchase of mobile VAS units, potentially supported by grants from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Moving forward, we will continue to advocate for our community's needs, with a particular focus on resolving our long-standing highways and drainage concerns.

Finally, once again I would like to thank all Councillors for their support to me over the last year and especially the Clerk, Lorna is an excellent clerk and has been an valuable asset to the Parish Council this year.

Councillor Rachel Reynolds