

Chairman's Report 2025/26

This last year has been far less stressful for the Parish Council, and Debbie has now fully settled into her role as Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer, which has made life so much easier for us as Councillors. Thank you Debbie. As you know I stepped down as Chair last May, but remained as Vice-Chair. Our new Chairman, Jules Moreton-Ford has taken the role in her stride, and we thank her for taking this on. We said goodbye to Councillors Marianne Prynne and Andy Clegg (who we thank for all their work with the council), and we welcomed new Councillor, Russell Ison.

So, what did we achieve over the last 12 months on behalf of Farringdon residents? ...Our biggest project (at a cost of £30,000, plus £6,000 VAT) was the upgrade of the playground to include more for toddlers and older children. So, what do you get for that amount of money? The zip-wire was replaced with 4 new installations including a trampoline, basket swing, rotating see-saw and balance poles. So now up to 8 children can utilise that space instead of 1. We also replaced the single Springer with a new Turtle springer (for 4 children to use), and installed a dedicated toddler play unit including a slide. We also created a new side pedestrian gate at the entrance to the MUGA to make it easier to access the Outdoor Gym.

We gave a grant to Alton Ramblers Footpath Maintenance Team who will hopefully help us maintain the footpaths on Stanks Lane and between Shirnall Hill / Parsonage Close. We also gave a grant to the South-Central Ambulance Charity (you heard Mark Blythe speak about this earlier). We also gave a donation to the Poppy Appeal, laying a wreath on behalf of the village following the Act of Remembrance and Remembrance Sunday Service – I would like to thank Nigel Plowright for leading 3 services that day.

We gave the Rose and Crown a new Defibrillator (on a 5-year loan) to be kept within the pub for easy access. We will continue to maintain this.

We continued working on looking for solutions for the Hall Lane / Brightstone Lane HGV issues, and the chasm following the disintegration of the road in Hall Lane. We will continue to badger HCC on your behalf.

We did not celebrate the 2nd birthday of the closure of Gaston Lane, but continued chasing every month. We now finally have a fixed date for the works to start. So hopefully next year we will have something positive to report.

We monitored the groundwater borehole level and communicated flood alert information to residents, cordoning off the playing field when flooded. Levels have dropped and within the next week the Flood Alert will be lifted.

We continue to employ our contractor PJ Grace to carry out grass cutting in several areas of the village, including the play areas and looking after the War Memorial Rose Gardens.

We paid for the bins to be emptied and in the last month organised and equipped a village litter pick. Thank you to Cllr Tony Causton and all those who took part, we really appreciate it and the village and A32 look so much tidier.

We held a planning meeting about the proposed Caker Stream Solar Farm (which we objected to on behalf of residents – although we could only comment as we were not a consultee due to it being on Worldham Parish's land, not Farringdon). We are continuing to try and have a voice on the Transport Management Plan to ensure the safest road plan for residents.

As a Council we became .gov.uk as is considered best practice. We closed the FVHCT, with the Charity Commission, after a confusing 12 months of correspondence. We thank John Hustler for all his time and energies as our outgoing Treasurer, and we wish the FVH CIO all the best for the future.

Cllr Maughan started a project called 'Farringdon an identity': which 87% of residents who responded to the consultation supported. As a result, she submitted the Community Funded Initiative (CFI) application to HCC in August 2025, we are still awaiting an outline in terms of cost and what is possible. Once we have this, we will present to the village for comment etc.

Finance wise - We changed banks from HSBC to Unity Bank which has a much better set up for Parish Councils, and we finally moved into the 21st Century and are now able to utilise Internet banking. As of the 31st March 2026 we have £86,018.34 in the bank. As reported at last year's meeting we reduced the precept to £15,000, but for one year only. It is now back to the original £25,000 (hence the hike in your Council Tax which is now the same as it was 2 years ago). The Precept is paid at the end of April and September each year. This allows us to continue to run the Parish Council, Ground Maintenance, Playground maintenance, insurance, website, signage, waste collection, grass cutting, maintaining the bus shelter and rose garden. Plus, the Clerk's salary (including pension, NI, tax and payroll), we are required, by law to employ a clerk. Councillors are not paid, only expenses.

WHAT'S NEXT

We are introducing a Councillor Area of Responsibility: The named person would be a point of contact and would report back at Parish Council meetings.

- Cllr Maughan: Business Park, MUGA/Playground, The Street, Shirnall Meadow and south of the crossroads to and including the Industrial Centre.
- Cllr Ison: Woodside, and New Road (BOAT) to the Church Green and the A32 from the Forge to Park Cottage / Norse Copse.
- Cllr Williams: Brightstone Lane to Sunnyside, Lord's Wood front and any other areas not covered.
- Cllr Moreton-Ford: A32 from (and including) Cherry Tree Farm to (and including) Kitcombe Lane and the back of Lords Wood.
- Cllr Causton: Crows Lane, Gaston Lane, Hall Lane, Church Road and Parsonage Close.

And we are looking at the possibility of upgrading the old main climbing frame in the playground (utilising the £6,000 VAT return from playground as part of the funding).

Finally, I would like to say thank you....

To Sarah and Charlie Farquhar for continuing to manage the batteries and speed Smileys on the A32.

To the Ladies who look after the A32 /Shirnall Hill Corner with lovely floral displays.

To Bahnstormers for continuing to water the War Memorial Rose Gardens.

To all the volunteers who keep the village garden looking wonderful.

To those who help at the village coffee mornings, churchyard clear ups, over 65's party and progressive supper to name some.

And to Patrick Fuller and team at the Village Magazine, Zorro at Farringdon Net, Bob at Farringdon Biz, the FVWAG and Nessie News on Facebook who contribute to keep us all informed.

And finally, I would like to thank the Councillors for their time and efforts which are given free of charge.