

Walton Parish Council Chairman's Report 2025

May I begin by once again thanking all our Parish Councillors for their hard work and dedication over the past year.

It was with great sadness that we lost Councillor Stephen Sharp this year, after his long battle with ill health. Stephen was a tremendous asset to the Parish Council, bringing a unique set of skills that helped achieve many improvements across the village — not least his major contributions to the creation of the cycle track and the playground. He will be greatly missed by us all.

However, Stephen would be the first to remind us that Parish Council work must continue. I am very pleased to welcome Siobhan Riley as our newest Councillor. With her background in property and her active involvement in village matters over the past three years, I am sure her enthusiasm and insight will be of great benefit to the Parish. I am confident Stephen would have thoroughly approved of her appointment.

A big thank you also to Deborah, our Parish Clerk. Her dedication and professionalism ensure that everything we do is compliant, allowing councillors to focus their energies on making a difference rather than getting tied up in administration.

Our local Ward Councillors — Alan, Norma, and Penny — have also been incredibly supportive this year, particularly with key issues like highways and drainage. Their ability to connect us with the right people in local and statutory authorities has made a real difference in getting our concerns heard and addressed.

Looking back over the year, I'm delighted to report that crime in the village remains negligible — we continue to live in one of the safest communities in the area.

We're also excited that the village pub is expected to reopen this summer, restoring a key community hub that we've sorely missed over the past few years.

The Village Hall, under the leadership of Brian, Mark, and the committee, has had an excellent year. The transformational refurbishment carried out last year is now bearing fruit, with the Hall hosting a wide range of events, including the Christmas lights switch-on and Bonfire Night, both of which were huge successes. Larger events such as weddings are also increasing, raising the village's profile and generating vital income. This funding supports not just the Hall, but also the community garden, playground, and other village amenities, helping ensure a sustainable future.

The cycle path continues to be well-used, and I would like to thank the companies that renewed their sponsorships, supporting a structured maintenance programme. Our community spirit has been on full display too — just last month, more than 20

villagers came together to plant an additional 600 whips, an incredible show of effort and teamwork.

Of course, challenges remain. Drainage and highways continue to be two of the biggest concerns, particularly as we look towards future developments. Progress is slow but steady: we have built strong links with Yorkshire Water through regular working party meetings led by Brodie Clarke, and through their work we are now making sure that planning authorities are fully aware of our outdated drainage system before making decisions.

On highways, new signage has been provided and will be installed shortly. We are also exploring the possible closure of Springs Lane to reduce through traffic — a proposal that the village will be fully consulted on over the next 12 months.

In terms of development, the Parish Council remains firmly in favour of appropriate and well-considered projects. It is pleasing to see work finally starting on the Springs Lane housing site. We have also received a revised application for a more compliant housing scheme at Walnut Farm, which will need careful village review. Additionally, the glamping site and the new village shop/café — both granted on appeal — remain subject to conditions, particularly around drainage, before they can proceed.

Although it can be frustrating when our Parish Plan is sometimes overridden by broader policies, I remain firmly of the view that positive, appropriate development can enhance the social, economic, and environmental well-being of our village.

As you can see, there is plenty going on. My sincere thanks to everyone involved with Walton Parish Council and to all those who give their time, energy, and commitment to making Walton such a wonderful place to live.

Thank you.