

Chairman's Report 2023/24

Firstly, I must mention the passing Michael McMullen on the 17th February 2024. Michael was a valued member of the Parish and was Chairman of Bengoe Rural Parish council for a number of years. I attended the funeral on behalf of the Parish Council.

As of 1 April 2023 – Victoria Preuss took up the role of Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer. Victoria has provided high level support to both myself as Chair and to the other Councillors.

Finances: We have remained in budget during the year. But due to inflation and our aspiration to develop a new play area within Tonwell, the Parish Council took the difficult decision to increase the precept this year.

Health and Safety: Both defibrillators within the Parish are registered on the national Circuit website which provides quarterly reminders for checks to be carried out. A fault was reported with the one in Tonwell, but this was fixed in year. The annual playground inspection was carried out, with some recommendations which the Council are taking forward.

Contractors: Our contractors for grass and hedge maintenance have remained the same and once again have done an excellent job.

Tonwell Playing Field: During the year a number of trees have been planted in the top corner of the field in the bid to create a small wooded area. The trees were given to the Parish as part of East Herts Tree Strategy and are native to the area. It is pleasing to see that they are growing. Also, two of the village benches have been relocated onto the field to provide some much needed seating.

School: Two Christmas trees were donated by Woodhall Estates. One tree was put up outside the school with the other being put up on the village green by the Parish Council. I must also note the announcement to close the school. This decision has been taken by the county council and was not supported by the Parish Council. We await to learn more about the future of the site.

Chapmore End Pond: Finally, the damaged post and railings around the pond were replaced by Herts Council. It has taken a number of years to get this work completed. The post and railings have also recently been painted.

Planning: We have seen a number of planning applications. The members have discussed and dealt with these in a professional manner.

Bus Turnaround - During the year following contact being made by Highways, it was determined that the bus turnaround in Tonwell fell under their responsibility to maintain rather than the Parish Council. Since this was confirmed, Highways have carried out some works in the area.

I would like to thank Neil, Matt C, Jayne, and Matt L for their continued support. I would also like to thank Ken Crofton and Aubrey Holt for their continued advice and support.

Cllr Tony Ellis