

Chair's Report 2026

I am pleased to say that during this last year, since April 2025, despite new challenges, Tiptree Parish Council has enjoyed a year of relative stability.

On the staffing side, we did employ a communications officer in June last year who was with us for 5 months. Unfortunately, for us, she found a better job, in media, in London. Otherwise, we have seen no staff changes this year. Our Parish Clerk, Ross Gurney, who took up the post at the end of 2024. Is now firmly settled into his role and is ably supported by our deputy clerk, Jill Williams and our Community Centre Manager, Julie Webster. Tiptree continues to benefit from our excellent grounds team led by Scott Hales with strong support from Kieran Hales as well as our Tiptree Ranger, Gordon Marshall and our Gate and washroom attendant, Michael Serra. Our Community Centre caretakers, Dave Philpot and Neil Yelland complete an excellent team of hard-working and dedicated employees. We are very grateful to them all.

On the functional side, besides the monthly Full Council meetings, we have three committees that meet monthly; 'Planning & Highways', 'Amenities & the Environment' and 'Community & Indoor Spaces' and one committee, 'Policy and Finance', that meets less frequently. We also have two subcommittees, 'Staffing' and 'Youth Hub project' that meet as required. The committee reports are provided with this report.

The Amenities and Environment committee manages much of the community space around the village and several of these sites have play equipment installed which we continue to inspect, maintain and replace to provide play equipment for all younger age groups and sensory needs. This year has seen the installation of some exciting new play equipment at Caxton Close and we are working on forthcoming 'SEND' equipment that caters for special needs on the land in Thyme Road that we acquired from Colchester City Council last year. On Grove Road Playing Field we have added a scooter track. Following the bespoke educational signs that were placed at Park Lane Local Nature Reserve last year, another has been placed by the pond and we recently unveiled a sign for Windmill Green that describes the history of the green. Other projects have been the provision of a bench in memory of Cllr Mannion at the duck pond, the restoration of a historic 'finger post'. Lastly, this year we finally gained access to Warriors Rest woodland allowing machinery to be used for woodland management to make this amenity available to the public.

The Community and Indoor Spaces committee has overseen the installation of air conditioning at the Community Centre. This is a welcome addition to the facility. This committee was created with the aim of improving community engagement and this year in celebration of World Women's Day, which also came close to coinciding with Mothers' Day, an outreach event outside the Council Office proved popular with passersby. On a larger scale we have established a Youth Hub subcommittee to press ahead with the plans to replace the Scout Hut which, after nearly 50 years, has reached the end of its life. The subcommittee has been consulting with interested parties to create a design brief we can take to an architect for preliminary drawings. It has also been exploring options for the siting of the hub. Finance will come from accumulating Developer S106 contributions.

The Planning and Highways committee acts as consultee to Colchester planning office on local planning decisions but also oversees highways projects. This year we saw parking lines added in Anchor Road following a lengthy consultation after concerns were raised by residents. Also, we are

now in possession of a Vehicle Activated Speed Sign that will shortly be erected in Maldon Road, Tiptree Heath. We have also paid for a Pedestrian-Vehicle survey at Grove Lake. This will take place in the next month or so and is part of an on-going campaign to provide a safe crossing. Similarly, we have paid for a speed survey in Newbridge Road with a view to extending the speed limit to the end of the built-up area.

Tiptree Parish Council is also able to offer modest grants to local organisations for the benefit of the community. This year grants have been awarded to 'Hope for Tomorrow' NHS mobile cancer unit, Tiptree URC for graveyard maintenance, Friends of Tiptree Heath, Tiptree Youth Project Outreach and the Old Maldonians Badminton Club for new sports equipment.

There are, of course, a number of on-going issues for the Council to contend with. The creation of the allotments and adoption of the public open space at Nine Acres progresses at a frustratingly slow pace. Workers are now on site to create the allotments but we are still having to ensure that planning conditions are not forgotten. We are progressing plans for the north of Tiptree in accordance with the adopted Neighbourhood Plan but we have also faced a planning appeal by Bloor Homes on the field opposite the Heath School. If this proposal is granted it will place another 160 homes in an inappropriate location, undermine the Neighbourhood Plan and open Tiptree to a flood of speculative planning applications. The Appeal ran over six days in March and we await the decision at the end of May. The NPPF gives weight to Neighbourhood plans that are less than five years old so we are more than hopeful the appeal will be dismissed. However, it does mean we will need to begin the process of reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan to keep it UpToDate.

In all these things, Tiptree Parish Council has played an important role and it has been another successful year. I would like to take the opportunity to publicly thank all members of the Council who freely give their time for the betterment of the village. We are privileged to have the Council we do and it is my honour to work with such a gifted and dedicated team. I am particularly grateful to all the committee Chairs and Vice-chairs who keep it all together and ensure that the Council runs smoothly. I am also extremely grateful to our support staff whether they are based in the office, the Community Centre or the Workshop. It is a privilege to work with you all.

Thank you

Jonathan Greenwood